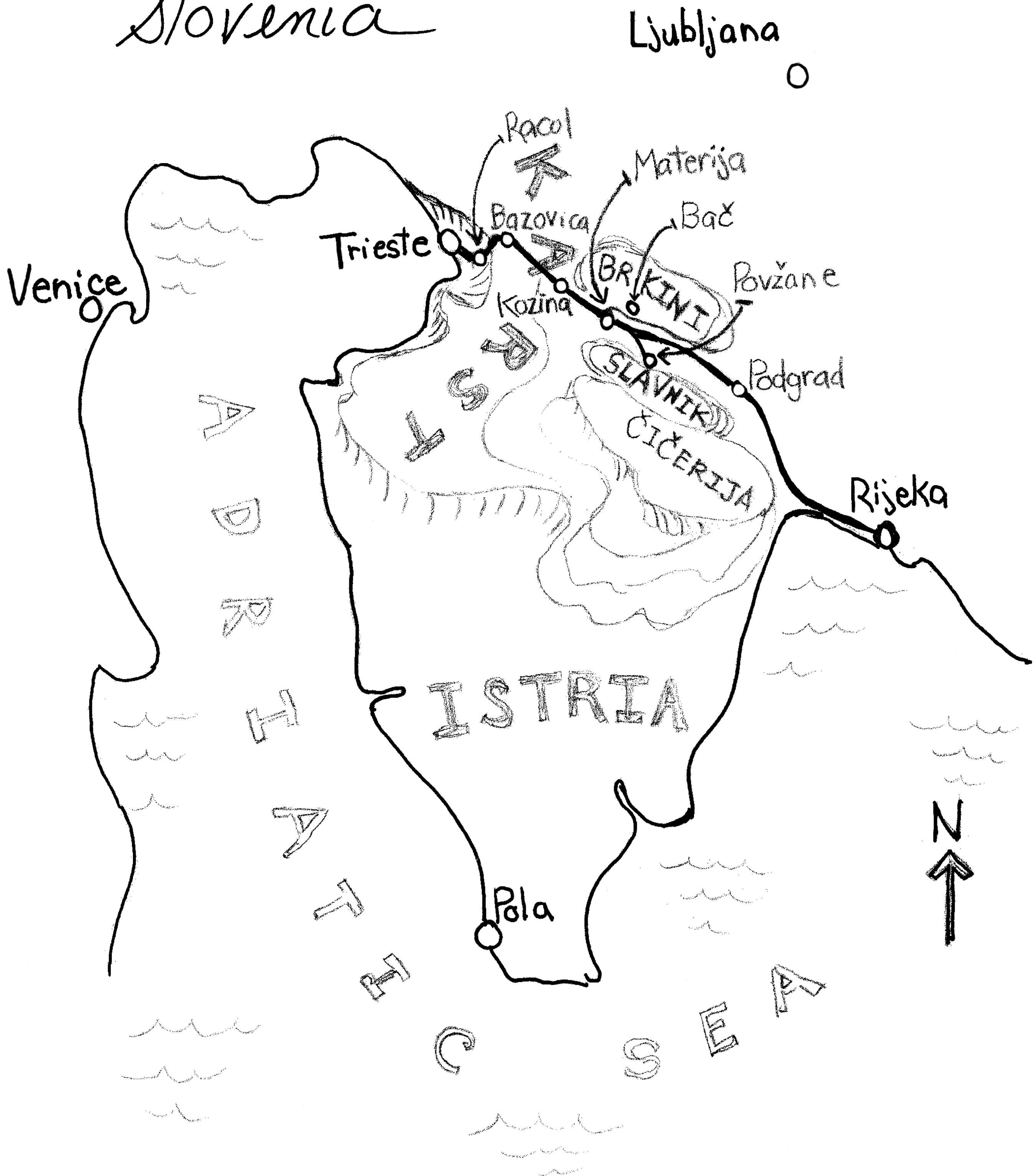
Leaving Home In 1913

By Amy Fradel



Map By Amy Fradel

In southwestern Slovenia, just a few miles outside the port cities of Trieste and Koper on the Adriatic coast, a high bluff arises. This limestone land feature is called the Karst; it is porous, and full of caves, and underground rivers. The triangle-shaped Istrian peninsula lies to the south. Across the base of the triangle, in a south-westerly direction from Hrpelje-Kozina to Podgrad, there is 12-mile stretch of road through a valley that has no river. At Podgrad, the valley widens, and the road continues another 24 miles across the base of the Istrian peninsula to the port of Rijeka in Croatia.

The mountain ridge on the south side of this 12-mile riverless valley is called Slavnik; it is forested and unpopulated. The valley itself and the north ridge is called Brkini. It is dotted with 20 to 30 little villages of two storied houses and barns built of stone and roofed with orange tiles. The houses are tightly clustered, in some places built like rowhouses. The fields lie outside of each village. Fields belonging to a particular farmer are not contiguous but scattered all over the place, and in the old times, the whole village shared the woodlands. In Brkini there has never been enough surface water to reliably support agriculture, so the region has always been poor. In the old times there were a few shallow wells, cisterns, and hand dug ponds; in times of drought, hunger was real. In modern times, the government pipes water from the deep underground rivers of the Karst, but farming there still doesn't make economic sense.

Hrpelje and Kozina are towns abutting each other. Four miles southwest on the valley road are three small villages conjoining one another. Materija is the largest, with houses on either side of the road, a post office, a store, several places to eat and drink called *gostilnas*, and in earlier times, a clinic. Next, on the north side of the road, Bač nestles on a slight hill. A few meters

after Materija, a street cuts off to the south at a 45 degree angle, into a cluster of 30 houses. This is Povžane.

My grandmother, Marija Fabjančič, married Janez Fradel. The Fabjančič and Fradel families of Povžane appear in the local church books dating back to 1630, when record keeping began. They always married within Brkini. They were subsistence farmers; the sale of surplus produce, pigs, firewood, wild mushrooms, and juniper berries in the Trieste market twelve miles away on a gravel road, brought a little cash. The more prosperous families owned a wagon with oxen to go to market. In her later years, my grandmother described going to the Trieste market in those peaceful years before the Great War of 1914 and all the havoc that was to follow. Her daughter, my Aunt Mary Hrebar, very wisely wrote down what she said. Compared to the life described in the letters that Grandma received from Slovenia between 1913 and 1960, her recollections sound like an idealized version of reality:

> *Mother first visited Trieste with her mother when she was six or seven. Then she joined her older brother and sisters in taking produce to the market place in Trieste by carrying their best produce on top of their heads in a basket with handles on it made from woven sticks called a **plenir.** It was supported on their heads with a roll made of old cloths or wool called a **svitek.** Mother carried milk, eggs, homemade butter, cheese, cottage cheese, green beans, peas, carrots, dried beans, potatoes, cabbage and fruit such as strawberries and cherries. Homemade pršut, kolbase, and live chickens also went. When whole lambs or calves, hay, or bundles of wood and twigs were taken to market, the wagon with iron wheels pulled by oxen was used.*

They would start to Trieste at 11:00 at night for the twelve-mile walk. The road was winding and steep. They had to rest five times because of the heavy load on their heads. They walked to Kozina, then to Nasirec, Krvavi Potok and Bazovica before they descended the Karst bluff to Racol where her aunt lived, and into Trieste. In the villages along the way there were places to water the oxen, or hire additional animals for a particularly steep part of the road when needed. They would get there at 5:00 in the morning. After selling everything, they used the money to buy staples such as sugar, coffee, rice, and macaroni. Mother always bought tobacco for her father.

One bad experience mother vividly remembers is the time there was an abundance of mushrooms around Povžane, so she picked quite a few, took them to market, and found that there must have been a bumper crop everywhere, as the Trieste marketplace was flooded with them, so much so, that all the peddlers had to dump their mushrooms into the Adriatic Sea. That day she made only 17cents which she placed in her pocket. She bought a lemonade for two cents, had 15 cents left, and while drinking her lemonade a pickpocket stole her money. She had to borrow from her aunt in Racol to bring home the coffee, sugar, etc. her mother expected. Mother had steady customers for the milk she brought in to market because her family never diluted it, as some did. After selling it to these people, who were actually wholesalers, they then diluted it and re-sold it.

Sometimes Grandma would say that she was Slovene and sometimes she said she was Austrian. As a child it was confusing to me. But this is how it was: Slovenia was part of the Austrian Empire and had been for centuries. She was Slovene by language and culture, but she was a citizen of Austria. She was proud of both. When Austria and Hungary forged the dual monarchy in 1867, its citizens remained either Austrian or Hungarian, but never both. The purpose of the union was for defense and foreign affairs, not for internal management.

In rural Slovenia there is a centuries old custom whereby each house has a name which may or may not be the same as that of the family living there. This name is likely to be that of the person who first built the house. Through subsequent generations, regardless of whether the farm or house was inherited by the male or female line, or even sold to an unrelated person, the house name remained the same. Even today neighbors will refer to each other by their house name, and it is not unusual for them to be ignorant of each other's true surname. A house might also be called by its post office number. This can be confusing because the houses have been renumbered at least once in the last hundred years.

When this story begins in 1913, my grandmother, Marija Fabjančič, was 22 years old. She was the youngest child in the house called Biščevi, a house that had been inhabited by her ancestors since at least the 1600s. Biščevi was, and still is, Povžane #4. Marija knew how to read and write, she worked in the fields with her family, sometimes she joined a crew of other young people to work for someone else for pay. She helped her mother in the house with cooking and housekeeping. Her two older sisters were married and had children. Just she and her brother Jožef remained at home, and it was time for Marija to marry. She was very beautiful,

with wavy brown hair, a pleasant, perfectly oval face, and soft brown eyes, with just a slight Slavic look about her. She was vain, and worried about her clothes, and looking good. By village standards, all the Biščevi girls dressed well. Marija was also very willful. She had numerous admirers, but tended to chase after the ones that her parents did not approve of. Naturally, there was a lot for a parent to consider. A husband should come from a family that they liked, he should be hardworking and sober, and preferably be a first son who would provide a home and land for his wife; less desirable was a man with a trade which might take them to live in Kozina or Trieste; worst was a younger son with neither land nor trade. The choice of a husband should promote peace and harmony in the extended family, and the village.

Marija's father, Josef, grew up in another 300-year-old house called Košančevi, that was just a stone's throw down the slope from Biščevi. Košančevi had borne just two sons in her father's generation around 1850. Ivan Fabjančič, the older son, would become the master of Košančevi. The younger son, Josef Fabjančič, was fortunate to marry Marija Cergolj, one of the two daughters of Biščevi. Her brothers had all died in infancy, so when Josef moved in with his wife's family in 1877, he was destined to become the master of Biščevi. The other daughter, Terezija, Marija's twin, married a man in Racol, part of Trieste, or Trst as it is written in Slovene.

Josef and Marija Fabjančič had eight children at Biščevi. Four were carried off by fevers or diarrheal diseases before their third birthday. The survivors were Terezija, Antonija, Jožef, and the youngest was my grandmother, Marija Elisabeth Fabjančič, born on the 23rd of November 1890.

On the far side of the village, Valentin Fradel lived in the house called Jurkotevi at Povžane #11. Valentin also came from an ancient line; his father came from the house called Fradelevi in Bač, and because he was the second son, when he married in 1860, he left to establish a new line of succession at Jurkotevi. Valentin Fradel, also called Jurko, was his only son. He married Ivana Fabjančič and they had 13 children; one died at birth, six died before age three, and six survived to adulthood. Of the survivors, Janez Fradel, my grandfather, was the eldest, born on the 23rd of February 1889.

Remember the house of Košančevi with the two sons? Ivana Fabjančič was the eldest child of Ivan who was the older son and the master of Košančevi. Ivan Košanc fell off a wagon in 1885, and died. Falling off wagons was not an unusual cause of death in this rugged farming community; it was akin to the frequency of fatal motor vehicle accidents today. Ivan Košanc was only 40 years old when he died. He left six daughters under the age of 18 without a father, including the one that was yet to be born, and a nine-year-old son named Frane. A woman with children could not afford to be widowed for long, so Ivan's wife quickly remarried, but she had no more children, thus Frane eventually became master of Košančevi.

Ivana Košančeva married two years after her father's death, then at the age of 22 she gave birth to Janez Fradel, my grandfather. Her father's brother; her uncle Josef Fabjančič, the younger one who had left Košančevi to become master of Biščevi, welcomed the birth of his youngest daughter, Marija, my grandmother, the following year. Thus, Ivana had a first cousin who was 23 years younger than she was, and who was the same age as her first son. So, now you see that my grandparents were first cousins, removed by one generation. They grew up together, went to school together, and had the same shared family. My Aunt Mary tells that one

time when Janez was 12 years old and in Trieste, he sent a postcard to Marija. I suppose that getting anything in the mail was exciting, even if it was just your cousin whom you saw nearly every day.

The imperial school that they attended served the three villages. It was a five-to-seven-minute walk from Povžane. It had one room, a woodstove, and a slate board. The teacher was a man; they were instructed in Slovene and discipline was maintained with a wooden ruler across the knuckles, and fear of a whipping upon returning home. They learned reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, religion, and national songs, in addition to some practical skills. The girls were taught to sew and make lace by the teacher's wife. Grandma did not know what the boys were taught. Classes were held six days a week, and the students were dismissed early enough to take coffee and bread to workers in the fields in the afternoon, and to help out with chores.

Opasilo was the highlight of the year, especially for the teenagers. It was the opportunity for young men to travel to other villages to meet young women. Every village had, and still has, its own opasilo, so there are numerous celebrations throughout the warmer months. One can stay quite busy going to *opasilos*. It is celebrated on the feast day of the saint to whom the local church is dedicated. Povžane is dedicated to St. George, whose feast day is 23 April, but since farmers are busy with planting at that time, it is always celebrated on the second Sunday in August, when the harvest is underway. In those days, after morning Mass, there was singing, dancing and food, then a big feast at home, and more outdoor dancing at night. Marija loved opasilo, as it was her chance to dress up, dance, and shine.

The Jurkotevi household was not a prosperous one. It had less land and fewer livestock than others. Although the Jurkotevi children did go to school, and learned to read and write, they did

not attend regularly. In 1909, Janez was 20 years old, and his only brother, Rudolf, was eight. In between, they had four sisters, and his mother was sickly with tuberculosis. Janez was a very sharp looking young man. He was of medium height, but very sturdy. He had dark blonde hair, blue eyes, and a strong angular jaw with a cleft chin. He carried himself with confidence and pride. As the eldest son, he might have felt obliged to help his father with the labor of the farm, but other men of the village were heeding the call of America, and Janez was ready to go. He may have persuaded his parents to agree to his departure with a promise to help them financially, but his real motivation was like many young men; he just wanted to explore the world. He left in December 1909 and stayed away for two or three years.

For centuries it was common practice for poor men in Brkini, especially younger sons, to go elsewhere to work for a few years to get money to buy land or help their families. Usually, they went to Trieste and other parts of Europe, but from 1890 to 1914, America was the land of opportunity.

In 1899, the Chesapeake &Ohio Railroad began work on a line that would run along the Greenbriar River from Ronceverte to Durbin in West Virginia, and work proceeded rapidly. Freight traffic on the new line serviced sawmills, tanneries, and farms. The West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company, and its subsidiary, the West Virginia Spruce Lumber Company, saw the construction of a logging railroad as a way to harvest virgin red spruce stands that still occupied the previously inaccessible high plateaus, ridges and valleys of Cheat Mountain in the Allegheny Range and tie into the new C&O line. They were in desperate need of workers to lay the narrow-gauge rails, with frequent switchbacks, that would enable short, powerful, coal-fired steam

locomotives to ascend the steep grades to the untouched mountain forests. All the treetops and any trunk with a diameter under 15 inches would feed their pulp and paper operations, while the large spruce would go to the sawmill in Cass. When one area was cut completely, the rails were torn up and re-used in a new area. Local rail links through the mountains connected to the C&O rail lines, and then to other major railroads that crisscrossed America. These rails delivered West Virginia spruce boards of the highest quality, paper products, and chemicals, to the rapidly growing industries and cities of America, and to its ports to be shipped worldwide. The C&O rail lines returned to Cass with a steady supply of workers who had just arrived in Ellis Island from Italy, Austria, Hungary, and Poland.

Josip Ban, was the first in Povžane to go to West Virginia. His first wife was Marija Fabjančič, another of the daughters left fatherless when Ivan Košanc fell off the wagon. Poor Marija died at age 26, leaving at least three children, so Josip quickly remarried. After just four years he was widowed again; he was 48 years old. Probably feeling quite cursed, he responded to an advertisement in Trieste that offered a package deal for a job at the West Virginia Spruce Lumber Company that included transportation. In 1906, he took the train to Le Havre, France, traveled on the steamship *Latouraine* to New York, and boarded another train to Cass, West Virginia. He ultimately recruited several dozen men from Brkini to work for the company. One was his nephew, Janez Fradel, my grandfather. In 1909, when Janez was 20 years old, he borrowed money for his passage (probably about $60-80). He departed Trieste on the steamship *Laura* on a voyage that took about two weeks to reach Ellis Island. He arrived 17 December 1909 and traveled by train to West Virginia. He lived in a big lumber camp in Davis with men that he knew, including Josip Ban, as well as a crew from Poland.

After two or three years Janez returned home. His mother had always been in poor health; birthing 13 children did not help, and at age 44, she died of tuberculosis while Janez was still in America. His father was struggling, and he had not managed to remarry. Whatever money Janez brought home with him did not really improve his family's life. Janez was quite the man in Povžane, strong and handsome with the allure of the returned adventurer, and the promise of America written all over him. Marija Fabjančič and Janez began (or resumed, perhaps) their relationship. But he was now over 21, and compulsory military service in the Austro-Hungarian Army awaited him. He was drafted into the 97th regiment and was stationed at Karlovec, just over the border in what is now Croatia. This allowed him to continue seeing Marija.

The 97th was made up of Austrian citizens from the areas of Italy, coastal Slovenia, and Croatia. It had a reputation for being somewhat lackadaisical, and had a notorious desertion rate. After just five months of service, Janez went to Trieste in late March 1913, hopped on the ship *Polonia,* and returned to West Virginia. It was not known till after he left that Marija Fabjančič was about two months pregnant. Tears, anger, and letters flowed; Mama had screaming outrages at Marija, and both her parents said scandalous, mean things about cousin Janez and the whole Jurkotevi clan. Valentin Fradel had little defense to offer for his son; he was already unhappy with him for the way he left. Marija's eldest sister, Rezina, was furious and embarrassed. The whole village was abuzz with gossip. Marija did not really want to go to America, especially after being deserted by Janez, but decisions were made for her; she no longer had a choice. Janez sent money for her passage.

At the same time, a remote cousin of Marija, and niece of Josip Ban, Francka Ban, was to leave for West Virginia to marry her betrothed, thus Marija had company on 13 July 1913 when

she boarded the *Kaiser Franz Josef I.* Her brother, Jožef, took them by wagon to Trieste and saw them off. The evening they sailed was beautiful, and a band played. Jožef had made a wooden suitcase, the kind that workers and soldiers used, called a ***baul,*** which could be stood on end and used as a wardrobe. In it, Marija carried just three dresses, a coat, and hand knitted stockings. She had been told not to bring much because the styles were different in America, and the plan was that she and Janez would be home again in two or three years. She packed a lot of cheese, because she was worried about being hungry on the passage.

Marija was now six months pregnant, and the ride in steerage cannot have been comfortable. Stories about trans-Atlantic steerage crossings tell how unsafe it could be with passengers preying on one another, the lack of privacy, and the dangers for women traveling alone. Marija had Francka with her, as well as Mr. and Mrs. Dablok, local people from Kozina. She never complained about the 11-day passage, which included stops in Patras, Palermo, Naples, and Algiers, to take on more passengers. An event that Grandma never mentioned was evidence of her stoicism, as she sat in steerage clinging to her baul, nibbling on her generous supply of cheese, and comforted by Francka, her companion. The event was reported in the *New York Times* on 27 July 1913. The upper decks carried wealthy and noble passengers who reported the event and took pictures. At the moment the *Kaiser Franz Josef I* passed over the grave of the Titanic, the liner lurched upward as if lifted by a tidal wave. The ship shook from stem to stern. The passengers in the upper decks crowded the top deck. In about five minutes a whale at least 70 feet long floated out from under the ship with a great gash in the middle of its back. Grandma never spoke of the terror or discomfort of the upheaval which in her state of pregnancy, must have caused tremendous seasickness.

The ship arrived at Ellis Island on 25 July 1913; they each had sewn into their clothes the minimum twenty-five dollars that was required for entry, and the processing took just a couple of hours. They were transported to Pennsylvania Station, and they bought a box of food for one dollar, as all the arriving passengers did in preparation for their ongoing journeys. The box contained one large salami, a loaf of bread, an apple pie, and some biscuits, which would sustain them for two days of travel. The women had with them prepaid train tickets to Cass. They arrived in Ronceverte, West Virginia, at half past one in the morning and had to spend the rest of the night on the platform. In the morning, the C&O passenger train took them the last 83 miles to Cass.

Although Cass had three churches, none were Catholic. The closest one was in Elkins, 50 miles away. About ten days after Marija's arrival, she and Janez traveled by train to Elkins to be married. The Elkins Station was a handsome, crisp, brick building newly built in 1908. The area around it had the rawness of unkempt emptiness. Across the muddy road, the Hotel Del Monte offered lodging for railway workers and travelers. It was a three-story brick, utilitarian looking building and Janez and Marija stayed there overnight. On Thursday 7 August 1913 they got their marriage certificate at city hall and were married at St. Brendan's Catholic Church which was just three blocks away. Father Daly, a priest from Ireland, performed the ceremony and wrote out their certificate. They had their photograph done at a studio, one that they would send to the family in Povžane, before taking the train back to Cass.

At the time of their marriage, St. Brendan's was a modest wooden structure with a front steeple. It was replaced with a stone structure of a similar size and style in 1928 which is now an arts center. The current church, an impressive modern structure of spruce beams, fieldstone, and

glass, now graces the valley. But the cloth-bound church archive, just one fat book for all marriages at St. Brendan's for over a century, was carried from church to church, and kept on the office shelf. In 2012 I visited St. Brendan's, took the book off the shelf, and saw Janez and Marija's wedding entered on Thursday 7 August 1913. Francka Ban and Janez Tomazič were married there on the 1st of September.

A curious note about the marriage entry involves the names of the parents of the bride and groom. The names puzzled my Aunt Mary who possessed the original certificate written out by Father Daly. As previously mentioned, Janez's mother's maiden name was Ivana Fabjančič, and she was the bride's first cousin. But Janez said that his mother's name was Ivana Kosancich (actually a bad spelling of Košančeva, her house name). Was this deliberate, to avoid questions about their cousin relationship? It seems unlikely that they were embarrassed by it, because first cousin marriages were common, and acceptable, both in the culture of Slovenia and under Austrian law. Perhaps they had been warned that West Virginia did not permit cousin marriages, and they sought to avoid any questioning. The truth is that some embarrassment about their kinship persisted in later years. My father, my aunts and my uncle, would admit to my generation that Grandpa's mother was a Fabjančič and Grandma was a Fabjančič, but always followed it with an emphatic statement, "But they were NOT cousins!" I think they had not figured out the "once removed" part.

The years of peak prosperity for the lumber town of Cass were from 1909 to the onset of the Great Depression. In 1913 when Janez and Marija arrived, Cass was booming. The diverse 1,700 people who lived there had a rigidly stratified society, and the new couple took

their place. On the west side of the Greenbriar River, the company built rental homes for its employees who did not live in the lumber camps. The managers lived in neat two-story white clapboard houses, on Big Bug Hill. It was the equivalent of today's gated community; it did not have gates but everyone knew not to enter without invitation. Another sector had more modest homes for the white American mill workers and mechanics. All grades of homes were supplied with running water and electricity. Planked sidewalks enabled the residents to walk around without getting their feet muddy. Completely separated and out of sight of these neighborhoods was another sector called Bohunk Hill where the immigrants lived segregated and hidden lives. ***Bohunk*** is a word that was derived from "Bohemian and Hungarian", and in American slang it was a derogatory word for low class laborers from anywhere in Eastern Europe. What they called the black part of town was worse. Over time the immigrant men might get recognition from work, and the children might get to know their schoolmates, but the immigrant women did not mix with other women. Cass had a general store, a butcher shop, clothing stores, a barbershop, a school, a hotel, restaurants, a movie theater, and a baseball team. There were two trains daily to Ronceverte. A dollar a week was withheld from the workers' paychecks for medical expenses, which included the services of the company doctor, and a midwife.

In Janez and Marija's house on Bohunk Hill lived twelve Slovenes including Josip Ban and his sons, and Andy Siskovič. Marija was paid to do the cooking, and her salary covered their rent and board. When she gave birth on the 21st of October, she was attended at home by "Granny" Bird, the company midwife. They named their daughter Ivanka, but soon they all Americanized their names to John, Mary, and Jennie; Jennie later changed her name to Jane.

The land across the Greenbriar River, not owned by the company, was another story. East Cass was accessed by a wire suspension footbridge, and decent people knew not to go there. For many men who lived in the camps up on the mountains, East Cass was their destination for their time off. "Dirty Street" was lined with saloons, poolrooms, gambling houses, boarding houses, hotels, and restaurants; copious amounts of whisky, wine, beer, and even cocaine, were available. Brawls were regular events, and murders were frequent. East Cass kept two or three policemen employed full-time. The black section of town was beyond East Cass, and had its own school and church. The town of Cass is now part of a state park. A visitor can ride the train, tour a reconstructed lumber camp, a museum, the general store, and a few of the American quarters that have been refurbished, but East Cass is gone, and nothing but a big green lawn remains of Bohunk Hill.

Every aspect of the work and life on the mountain had dangers. Death from falling trees or getting crushed between rail cars, or loss of limbs in the sawmill were the most frequent accidents. Suicides and domestic murders were also regular events. Drunkenness exacerbated all the dangers. It was common that a worker would get loaded on Dirty Street and carry more whisky to drink on his walk back to camp following the rails. He would pass out on the rails and be run over by a train. The Greenbriar River and its tributaries brought regular floods to the town. Fires on the mountain, fires in the train sheds, the mill, the stores, and the wood heated homes were regular perils. Diphtheria swept through every fall, and typhoid appeared sporadically. A smallpox outbreak which affected twelve people, and killed two of them, was cut short when the company responded swiftly with door-to-door mass vaccinations.

Unions did not thrive amongst the independent minded lumbermen; they were just as likely to permanently walk off the job when they were dissatisfied. The average pay was $1.50 per day plus room and board in the camps. The food was plentiful and good, and included daily meat, an unimaginable luxury in Brkini! Immigrants were paid pretty much the same as Americans, although sometimes grievances about pay, or language barriers, would explode into an attempted strike, or fights among the different ethnic groups and the Americans. The strikers never won. At one time eight Italians were dynamited as they slept in their mountain camp, an act pinned to resentment of foreigners taking American jobs, but no one was held accountable. The company could not be bothered to keep records of the foreigners with difficult sounding names. They were identified by an aluminum or a brass scrip token, "Austrian number 256" and the like. Presenting the token helped the bosses keep track of hours and pay. When one was killed it would be recorded; "Italian #142 killed today." Their identities were never recorded anywhere.

Over a thousand men were employed by the West Virginia Spruce Lumber Company. A polyglot stream of workers, with very few women, arrived and left continually. Italian workers were favored for maintaining the rails; they had to watch for washouts after a rain that might weaken the tracks, and cause an overturning of cars. Austrians were preferred in the pulpwood operations for "their hearty, cheerful, and contented natures" (Clarkson, R. *On Beyond the Leatherbark: The Cass Saga*, p.123). Attempts were made to group men in the camps by nationality, none of which ensured harmony; the term "Hungarian" might actually embrace Slovaks, Serbs, and Bulgarians; "Polish" might include Russians and Ukrainians; "Austrian" would include Slovenes, Croats, and Czechs.

My Aunt Mary said that Grandpa managed cutting, clearing, and hauling with a horse. During his first sojourn in West Virginia, he was working and living in a lumber camp and probably was doing woods operations, but I believe he moved into the sawmill, pulp operations or the extract plant that derived tannins and dyes from the discarded bark, which is why he could live in Cass and be home every night.

Although West Virginia was as mountainous as their home in Brkini, the environment was dramatically different for the Slovene workers on the mountain. The huge canopy of virgin trees did not admit sunlight. Flying ash from steam engines posed a continual risk of fire, someone had to walk along to put sparks out; falling trees, rolling logs, horses getting spooked by trains, shifting weights on the flat cars, and brake failures, threatened life and limb of the workers. The work went on through rain, snow, and ice. Short, robust Shay locomotives pushed their loads up the steep grades, switching in giant Zs from one ridge to another. The clanging and grinding of mighty gears, great hissing as steam was released, and billowing steam and smoke made a very noisy and powerful display of industrial might. It was inspiring, and fearsome, especially compared to the quiet pace of Brkini, where oxen pulled wagons, and life was dominated by the reaping of wheat and storing of root vegetables, the fear of war and poverty, and long winters without enough food.

At the bottom of the mountain, the trees were dumped off the flat cars into a holding pond, and floated into the sawmill that ran 22 hours a day; two eleven-hour shifts. The sawn boards were loaded onto flat cars and shipped out by rail. The smaller stuff and treetops were loaded into boxcars and carried to one of the company's pulp mills. The company had a workshop and

shed to repair and service the trains. Mechanical breakdowns were repaired with urgent efficiency by American workers.

As each section of the mountain was cleared, the camps were moved. John, Mary, and baby Jenny, moved to the town of Spruce, high on Cheat Mountain, and then to Richwood, to follow the work. In these new environs they were forced into mixed company, no longer living with just Slovenes. The housing and their companions were very rough, and it was increasingly difficult and lonely for Mary. She began corresponding with her family. Her brother Jožef was 25 years old, and they were very fond of each other. He was a regular correspondent. They wrote every one to two weeks. Every time she wrote, he wrote back right away, and she saved most of his letters. When they moved, she might miss letters. Letters stopped during the wars, and some were lost, but his letters give a good account of life in Povžane for decades.

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