OUR FIRST CANADIAN WINTER

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Memoirs of the George Homer Dean family settling in the Rama district (1907 through 1917)

My Early Years In England (pdf) (doc) (htm)

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The Early Days in the Rama District (doc) (pdf) (htm)

George Homer Dean & Mary Stubbings family tree, pedigree chart (4 generation) (pdf) (doc) (htm)

FOREWORD

In the fall of 1971, one of our nephews Kenneth Dean who lives in Saskatoon Sask, and has a machinery bussiness there visited my sister Nell and I where we now live close to the city of Duncan on Vancouver Island in British Columbia.

He was in the district to see his parents who lived not far from us.

It was during this visit, and while we were discussing things in general at the meal table that our conversation drifted back to earlier days In the Rama district in Saskatchewan where Ken. was born and brought up and where our family settled so many years before. Ken. then remarked that I seemed to remember much of what happened in those early times, and that as I was fast becoming one of the very few who could remember, or had experienced those times, that I should write an account of the early days in the Rama district, as he thought it might be of interest to his generation, and perhaps to some of the present.

I told him that this would be almost an impossibility for me, with my lack of education and my inability to accomplish anything of that nature, as I had spent my whole life in manual work.

However I did remark at this time that our first winter in Canada in the Rama district might make a good short story. During the following winter I decided to try this out to see if I could do it, and to see what the reaction was of others.

Later in the year Ken. visited again, and took the whole thing back with him Saskatoon where he had his secretary correct the mistakes and set it up in type.

It looked and read much better that way. So here it is.

OUR FIRST CANADIAN WINTER

This is the story of the Dean family who came to Canada in the spring of 1907 and spent the following winter in the Yorkton district of Saskatchewan. The general location was some 65 miles north west of the City of Yorkton “Then just a town" and the exact location was the N. E. quarter of section 32 Township 31, Range 7, which was my father's homestead. The nearest point of contact with the outside world was the town of Rama on the C. N. Railway between Winnipeg and Saskatoon. It was at that time nothing more than box like station with the usual platform, and at which the daily train did not stop at, unless it was flagged. There was a disused box car close by which housed the section foreman and opposite on the far side of the tracks a settler's house. This was John Borg and family who was later to become the village post-master. My father’s homestead was 3½ miles south and 1½ miles east. But this story should really start in Hamiota, Manitoba, as this was where we first located when we arrived in Canada from London England.

It was only natural that we should come to that point as my eldest brother George had come to the country the previous year and had worked for Bill Angus, a scotch farmer in the district roughly four miles north of the town. This farm was to be our headquarters for the following summer. At this time I should say that our family consisted of mother and dad, George the eldest, John, Arthur, Nellie, “myself, Vernon", and Muriel the youngest, all in that order. George must have been nineteen or twenty and Muriel two and a half years. I was eight, so knew little of what was going, or what the reason was for us to immigrate to this country. As far as I was concerned it was just an exciting adventure. Firstly that I should get out of going to school which I disliked from the very start, and in the second place I should be going places and seeing things.

The general idea seemed to be that the elder members would obtain homesteads and go into farming. Why, I shall never know, as dad and the three boys had always worked in the city and had not the slightest idea of how farming was carried out, or what it might cost to get involved in it. Perhaps it was just the draw of being able to obtain 160 acres of land for only ten dollars. Hundreds of people were attracted by this offer at that time. Manitoba and Sask. had been surveyed into quarter sections at that time, and one had only to pick out a suitable piece of land in what was thought a suitable location, pay the fee of ten dollars and they were all set to go, and providing they carried out the necessary duties stipulated by the government they could prove up and own the property at the end of three years. The duties consisted of plowing up five acres the first year. Ten acres the second year and fifteen on the third. Also, one had to reside on the place for six months of each year. Really quite a good scheme to settle up the country and many did very well, while others did very poorly or gave up in disgust. The whole thing depended on one's experience in farming, their ability to work, and their courage to put up with the hardships they experienced in a new and

rough country where there was not the slightest facility or help, and one's success or failure, and sometimes life or death depended completely on themselves.

It seemed we should have to stay where we were for some time at least until some plan had been worked out as to where we should settle, and to accumulate all the necessary equipment and supplies.

As George was the only one of who had any experience, having been in Canada for a year, we were obliged to depend on him for a general outline of what should be done, and whatever information could be obtained from the residents of the district who I expect had homesteaded in that district many years before, and had now well equipped farms and had enlarged them by buying adjacent quarter sections from others who had decided farming was not for them, and had moved. George had hired on for the seeding season with the farmer on the opposite side of the road from the Anguses where Mum and Dad & we three young ones were staying for the time being, so there was not much could be done but talk until George had worked out his time where he was. When he was free it was expected that he and dad would strike out to explore the out-lying districts to find suitable land where dad and each of the three elder boys could take up homesteads. Arthur was then only seventeen and could not file on a homestead until he was eighteen, but it was possible to have one reserved for him until he became eighteen.

In the meantime John and Arthur obtained work on the neighboring farms and dad set to work to renovate a small shack which was in the yard of the Angus farm, and we were to move into it for the summer months as soon as our car load of settlers effects arrived from Montreal. I was having a glorious time with the freedom of being able to go everywhere at will, in contrast to the confinement of the city, and to come in contact with all the farm animals and also to inspect the farm machinery and watch some of it work, as anything with wheels on it had always intrigued me from as long as I could remember. George, who from the time he left England had kept to his mad-brained idea of having him- self a home out of the wilds of Canada "although he was completely unfitted for it" had already got started in a small way by spending some of his previous years wages on 2 two year old steers that he was going to use for oxen, and he had also purchased a set of harness for them and I believe he said he had hitched them up to a sleigh a couple of times the previous winter and had got them trained to a point where he could lead them around while pulling the sleigh. These two steers were at that time running with the Angus cows and I had lots of time to get acquainted with them when they were in the corral at nights, as they were very quiet and docile. The harness was hanging up in the shack we were in and I was anxiously waiting for the time when I should see them hitched up as a team. Their names were Buck and Bright and they were of the short horn breed. One all red, one roan. My ardour was some what dampened when I found out I was going to have to attend the local school for a few months. However once started I didn't mind it so much, as I found discipline was less strict than in England, and altho' I had only been in grade two for four months in London I was promptly put into grade three.

In due course when George had completed his spring work, he and dad started out to locate our new home. Of this I don't know or remember much, only that they walked miles and miles all over everywhere, possibly getting the occasional ride with a settler and getting various opinions from who-ever they might see or stay with over night, as in those days it was unwritten law that anyone arriving at anyones home must be fed before going further, and accommodated over night if necessary, even if there was only floor or stable space available. How they hit on the Rama district I don't really know, hut I believe they were influenced by a farmer they met who had considered that part of the country himself as a good area. Perhaps they just got tired of walking and looking, as the Rama district at that time was not very attractive being about solid bush and slough with the occasional clearing, so that it was impossible to see very far or even tell what section one might be standing on.

The outcome of it all was that they obtained the whole section of 32 for my dad, George, John and my uncle Botell, who had also come to the country with us. An adjoining quarter of section 31 was reserved for Arthur. I think then that George came back and worked at the same farm again for the rest of the season and dad stayed and set about building some sort of shack for us to spend the winter in.

I think it was Joe Howes he employed to haul the lumber and aid him with the construction. Dad was not a carpenter by trade but as a boy had been apprenticed to a cabinet maker and had some carpenters tools and was quite handy with them, but was not accustomed to rough carpentry as it was then done in this country. Joe was a carpenter by trade and also a general "Jack of all trades" and was quite a valuable man in many ways. He also had a team of horses with which he could haul the lumber which had to be brought from Buchanan which was the next town east of Rama. It was exactly nine miles straight east of dad's homestead, but had to be approached by the Fort Pelly trail which was the only main trail in the area at that time, and wound endlessly around sloughs and through bush in such a circuitous way that it must have been at least fifteen miles of a trip. Joe lived two and a half miles west of dad's place on the N. W. quarter of section 36 - R8. He was a bachelor and didn't seem to be very anxious to do much of anything, unless lack of funds compelled him to do so, and I don't think he did any farming other than he was obliged to do to obtain the title to his homestead. He was quite a character tho' and spent a lot of time in visiting the various families that settled in the district, mainly to get a square meal and to cadge a few pipefulls of tobacco and discuss all that went on in the district. Any time he could be persuaded to become involved in some sort of work it was found he was very exacting and particular. This shack building took up a good bit of dad's time for the summer and when he returned harvest was under way and finally the threshing, so that when the boys all returned from their threshing runs we were all set to take off for Saskatchewan where we resided for many years after.

I have wondered many times since just what my parents thoughts were at this point as to whether they were doing the right thing or whether they were having grave doubts

as to whether they had made the right move in coming to Canada. I can remember my mother and the three boys were quite enthusiastic the whole time and very anxious to get going, partly no doubt because they didn't realize what they were up against. My dad I think felt differently, as from the start he was not taken with the country. It all seemed to him so rough and strange and desolate and was vastly different to the life he had experienced previously, that I think had it not been for the rest of the family he would have gladly picked up and gone back to England, but it was a great credit to him that he dug in and went along with it all. I can remember him saying that a dollar was just like a shilling. Why l remember this I don't know unless it was because I couldn't understand what he meant, as at that age I was not concerned with money matters and I could not see the slightest resemblance between a silver shilling and a paper dollar, but in later years realized that he was thinking that his hard earned savings that he had accumulated up till that time were now only capable of purchasing one quarter of this world's goods than at the time he earned it. Not a very pleasant thought, and it is one which I now have some sixty-five years later with regard to my own meager savings. Of our actual "taking off" I seem to be a little hazy, but I may have been at school much of the time, or more likely I was shoved off to the Stevens farm to keep me from getting under foot while the proceedings were going on, as I remember we left from there, and as they had 'a good democrat and driving team and their hired man, "who I remember was Jack Bush", was to take mother and us three younger ones to Shoal Lake on the C. P. R. line north of Hamiota - from there we were to go to Sheho by rail and across country to Rama. All our stuff was loaded into a Box Car, several big packing cases full of everything imaginable, three or four chests of drawers boxes of framed pictures and dozens of books, and at least half a dozen clocks, numerous trunks and a small piano and no end of things I have forgotten about and which we had brought all the way from England. By shipping them as settlers effects it was possible to transport a huge amount of stuff for very little, so we had brought everything but the kitchen sink as we really didn't know just what was going to be of most value to us. No doubt much of it was useless while other things were worth their weight in gold.

On top of all this stuff we had a kitchen stove we had bought in Hamiota, a used farm wagon and box, a big water barrel, several axes and shovels, crow bar, log chain and all such like junk. The two steers which from now on would have to be called oxen, several chickens, a dog and cat and some bags of potatoes which I remember got frozen before we had finished them all.

I expect it was a mixed freight train we were on, as this line was still in construction and I believe was not then built far past Sheho. As Yorkton was then the divisional point the train stayed over there and we were obliged to put up at the Balmoral hotel for the night.

I remember the following morning I was detailed to take out the dog and cat for a walk. We had kept the cat for safety in one of these string shopping bags which were used in England at that time and as soon as I let it out it dashed madly away, and as I followed

it "probably too closely so that it thought it was being chased", it squeezed through a sort of grating and disappeared completely. So that was the end of the cat.

I certainly got the laugh from the rest of the family as being the one who let the "cat out of the bag" and they didn't let me forget it. Later when Muriel grew up more, and someone told her at times that she had "let the cat out of the bag" about something, she would become quite indignant as she didn't understand the saying and would explosively answer that it wasn't her that let the cat out of the bag but Vernon was the one.

Another little incident which took place before we left Yorkton was that George must have thought that we perhaps didn't have a big enough stock of flour and so proceeded to buy one more bag and load it in the car. He was spotted in the act by some officious individual connected to the railroad and was told that he couldn't load extra freight between points. There is no doubt that this would be the rule when applied to large shipments of freight as the company would then be transporting much more weight but at the original charge. However I don't think one sack of flour on a settlers carload would be any cause for complaint. There always seems to be the odd guy who picks on trivial cases of that nature but I think its principally to let people know that they know all the answers, and it boosts their ego a bit. There was quite a bit of arguing back and forth between this man and dad, and the boys, and for a few minutes things became quite hot which of course attracted a little crowd of "hang arounders" curious to see if it would develop into a fight. Finally George walked off to see the station agent who at once gave him permission to load the flour and this other character immediately cooled off and disappeared. I had been standing around as kids usually do and taking in all the goings on and became particularly intrigued with an old gent with what seemed to me a queer dialect as I was mostly used to our cockney dialect and he seemed to be having more to say than anyone else about the hole mix up and finished up by saying, Yeah! And as for the chap at Sheho, he's a regular sod. I came out with this little bit some days later, much to the amusement of the rest of the family and always after when referring to anyone who was a bit of a trouble maker he was described as being like "the man at Sheho."

We arrived at Sheho around the middle of the day and our car was duly spotted and the business of unloading started. I have forgotten to say that the talkative person with the queer dialect turned out to be John Upex who we were going to see and hear a lot of in the following years, and he had filed on to the S. E. quarter of section 31 which was directly beside John's, and had perhaps been to Yorkton for that very purpose and so by chance contacted us as he was about to board the train for his return to Rama. He was somehow related to Jack Meakin, a Manitoba farmer who had taken up a quarter on the east side of the Rama road and was already established there. As before Jack Upex was "Johnie on the Spot" as the unloading took place and did a lot of talking mixed with much free advice as to what was the best way to tackle the job.

I suppose arrangements must have been made which I was not aware of as to our arrival,for there were several neighbors there with their wagons and teams to transport our stuff to the homestead, but strangely I don't remember who they were only that one was Ben Grieves, and Jack Meakin had come with his horses and democrat to take mother and us three younger ones out as far as Murrays for the night where we were to be picked up the following day after some order had been restored at our shack. However, I begged to be allowed to go with the men and wagons as I was vitally interested in all the goings on, and after a little discussing back and forth between dad and the boys it was decided that I wouldn't be too much trouble.

It was decided to hitch the two oxen to our wagon and let them pull it home. This was rather an unstable way of doing things, but it was one way of transporting both oxen and wagon to their destination. The wagon was loaded with some of the bulky things which took up a lot of room but didn't have much weight, and the oxen were harnessed and pushed and shoved into position and hitched to the wagon and finally lead out into the main street, and more or less herded out of town and on to the trail leading north from Sheho with George being in charge of the team by means of ownership.

As several of us stood watching the wagon and team receding from sight it suddenly occurred to Arthur that he was still holding on to the oxen whip instead of leaving it with George, and I volunteered to dash madly off in pursuit with it and would then be able to watch the procedure of the oxen, but this was squashed by Jack Upex who had been handing out free advice during all the unloading and claimed that, "They'll go they, don't need no whip" and of course most likely they would not until they became exhausted and found themselves being forced out into the unknown. Something which most cattle don't like. All the odds and ends were gathered up and put to rights and we left on the last wagon but I don't remember with whom.

Just outside Sheho there was a sharp hill and a creek or river at the bottom with a steam threshing engine upset into it, where it had been for some time. It was reported that the engineer had lost control of it while either going up or coming down the hill and it was considered impossible to up right it and remove it with any means available at that time.

We travelled on for some miles, I have no idea how many but it was approaching dusk in the evening when we caught up with some of the other wagons including George, and as was to be expected his oxen had become tired and played out. One of them had decided to lay down and rest but with the strangeness of being attached to the wagon had got down on to his knees and was evidently wondering how to manipulate the rest of the way down.

Ben Grieves looking across from his wagon, spat out his chewing tobacco and remarked “Goddam methodist aye"? There was a farm close by and it was decided that if possible George should put up there and follow on the next day when the team would be rested. It was also suggested that I should stay too, as I suspect they thought

I would only become a nuisance by becoming tired as there was still a long way to go. In those days people automatically accommodated travellers over night regardless of the inconvenience to themselves and gave what they had to offer whether much or little and it was received always with thanks - never with any sort of payment. So we stayed there over night. I don't remember the name of the people. There was a young family of at least four children - the eldest may have been fourteen and I think all or nearly all were girls. I thought they were of Norwegian or Swedish nationality but again I am not sure. They gave us a good supper and I think George slept in the stable and I remember while I was watching George feed and tend to the oxen, the eldest girl came out to milk the cow which she called Solie or some such thing, and I remember thinking what a funny name it was for a cow. I was accommodated in the house which was a single oblong room with living space at one end and sleeping at the other. I was given a small comfortable bed and I remember the mother calling the youngsters to the far end of the room in case I should feel embarrassed in undressing in front of strangers.

I was of course immediately dead to the world as I must have been quite tired with all the running around and general excitement. The next thing I knew I was wakening to the smell of coffee percolating, altho' it was still dark and I sure enjoyed the breakfast of bacon and eggs we were served with, and was then all set for the adventure of going the rest of the way to our new home. We got the oxen hooked up again and George bunked me up onto the wagon and told me to hang on to the lines but the oxen sensing something out of the ordinary suddenly dashed off in the direction of a pasture gate and George had to run to beat sixty to head them off and stop them while I was hanging on for dear life and wondering what would happen next. George then led them back on to the trail and stayed walking ahead of them for awhile with me sitting up on the wagon and thinking I was driving them which gave me quite a thrill, and took off some of the monotony of the journey.

It seemed we wandered on endlessly following trails from farm to farm in a north easterly direction and must have connected with the Pelly trail which was noticeable by" all the foxtail growing along its sides. I don't remember that we had anything to eat with us which was expected perhaps by green horns from the city. About noon or perhaps later we had got as far as Joe Howes place and George thought he would stop there and feed and rest the team, of course we were hungry too, having walked and rode in spells for what seemed to me a lot of miles. A little difficulty arose at this point as the oxen objected to turning off the trail and it took a lot of persuasion along with much shouting and bad language from George who like all the Deans could fly into a tearing rage at the least provocation. However this was all for nothing for at that moment John appeared in the distance running towards us and endeavoring to stop us from going any further in the direction we were now heading.

Arriving breathlessly he started to say that we should keep on towards home, as dad had suggested that it might be as well if we didn't become too involved with Joe, as he suspected he had his eye on us as an easy mark in getting a little money out of us for help and advice that we didn't require. After a little talking back and forth it was

decided we go on as John said it wasn't too far now. It was actually two miles east as the crow flies but by the winding trail it was at least three miles and probably the longest I had ever travelled as I was by now becoming tired and hungry as were the oxen, so that they naturally were slowing down. In the next half mile or so we crossed the point where the Rama road now is, and perhaps a hundred yards or so to the south of where the Buchanan road intersects. I remember this so well because the Rama road had been cut through the trees the previous summer, and it seemed quite striking to see this distinct grove cut through the trees and reaching to the horizon like an oblong slice cut from a cake, while in every other direction there was not the least sign of life or civilization other than the trail we were on. Finally after what seemed the longest time ever to me we emerged out of the trees into the very small clearing where the shack was and we were home.

As with all youngsters, tiredness was momentarily forgotten in the curiosity and excitement of the shack and the surroundings, but shortly hunger took first place and we sat down on any convenient box with something to eat.

The oxen had been unhitched and turned loose to forage for themselves as we as yet had no hay, and it was only a few minutes until someone glanced through the window and they had disappeared from sight completely.

There was some frantic rushing around by everyone, as it was expected they would be so tired that they would not wonder. Actually they had merely gone through the trees to a nearby slough to get a drink, but as we were completely surrounded by thick bush it was quite sometime before they were discovered grazing at the waters edge, or I should say the sloughs edge as it was already "freeze up" and there was some two inches of ice already, and this was our only means of drinking water. We realized at once that we should have included a cow bell in our supplies, but this was only one of many things we didn't have, partly from the expense, but mostly from not knowing what we needed. Some time later we discovered among our belongings that we called a muffin bell, because a similar kind was used by men who went around the streets and sold muffins and crumpets in London, and used the bell as a means of attracting attention. It was a normal shaped bell, but quite small, “only about four inches high” and we used that as a cow bell but it was hot much use as it only gave a tinkle and could not be heard for any distance, but it was better than nothing as cattle could hide within a few yards of one with all the bush there was around.

We were very fortunate with the weather for our moving in having nice Indian summer weather which I remember stayed with us for some time and altho' it had frozen up it was still not too cold at nights.

Now to describe our shack, it was in size 14 x 28 feet built with half inch sheeting. Something which has not been available for many years now but then quite common. One ply of white building paper and one ply of tar paper and covered outside with drop siding “pretty flimsy walls". The roof was a car roof, “also not seen anymore". It was

constructed in a bow shape by bending half inch boards over and covering them with two ply of tar paper, covered again by more half inch boards positioned over the joints of the under ones. It was usually quite surprising if it didn't leak. There was a door and two windows in the front or south side and one quite small square one in the east side. Inside there was a spruce floor which in time became worn down to splinters, leaving the knots all sticking up, but of course it had to take a lot of wear and abuse, and Mum and sister Nell spent many hours hard work in scrubbing it. In the centre or thereabouts of this oblong shaped shack there was a partition across with door-ways at either side but no doors, and as far as I can remember there never was more than curtains over these openings. This partition was quite thin and flimsy as it appeared dad had run short on lumber and had been obliged to use poplar poles for 2 x 4 studding and these in turn only covered with half inch boards. Later another partition was made at right angles to this one, making two narrow rooms for sleeping purposes. Pretty close quarters to accommodate a family of eight and for a time my Uncle Botell who was obliged to stay with us until such times as we got around to helping him build his own shack.

When George and I arrived the kitchen stove was already in place and dad had been complaining at the stove pipes and galvanized iron roof jack, and considered it a tin-pot way of doing things compared to the solid brick chimneys and flues that he was accustomed to in England.

The living room area was piled full of all our belongings and packing cases of this and that, which for the time being were shoved against the walls and used as places to sit and sleep and one of the bigger ones as a temporary table until such times as dad got around to building a proper one, which would have to be a big one to accommodate all of us. The piano was uncrated and the case was used to house our dozen chickens for the time being.

Where we all slept those first few nights I can't just remember, but mostly I expect on the floor, and it didn't concern me in the least as I was too interested in everything that was going on to worry about a little discomfort and inconvenience. By noon the following day some sort of order had been restored and George prepared to leave to pick up Mother and Nell and Muriel who had spent the night with the Murrays. I immediately sprang to life at the prospect of going with him but soon cooled down when I was told that I would have to stay home altho' I still hovered around while the hitching up was going on and tried to sidle off with the wagon and team as it left and was promptly told to "Go back" of which I took no notice.

As the oxen found themselves being driven off from what they had already come to consider their home or resting place, they started to object to some extent by endeavoring to turn around and as they had not yet had time enough to become trained to the point where they cold be steered by the lines, George was having a little trouble to persuade them to keep on down the trail, I took advantage of this to creep a little closer in hope that I might be called upon for some assistance, and so wiggled

myself into going with him for the rest of the way. This form of stratagem did not work, for as soon as he had got them back on the trail again after much loss of temper, he turned to me and shouted viciously “I thought I told you to go back”, but as I continue to follow at a discrete fifty yards he showed no signs of relenting and did not as much as look back, no doubt thinking this method might have the best effect as it seemed words did not. However, I was not able to be put off so easily at that point, but some doubt crept in a little later when I seemed to reach the point of “no return” when I became afraid to go back alone and afraid to catch up on the wagon, so taking the line of least resistance I just lept following. The Murrays had come before us but I expect not very long before, as they had not yet got onto their quarter section but were housed in Donald McLellan’s log shack on the quarter section directly across the road from them. Mac. as he became known to everyone was not there but was most likely out finishing up his threshing as he was a steam engineer and a blacksmith, and later became the district blacksmith. To reach this point at that time it was necessary to travell back west on the Pelly trail as far as Joe Howes place as a means of getting around a big slough which later became known as Murrays slough, altho’ it was on the quarter north of them. It was then a half mile back to the McLellan place. Truly a lot of travell to go two miles.

As George and team arrived at the shack I was still reluctant to approach any closer, thinking I should surely be allowed to ride home on the return. So with this in mind I sat down in what appeared to be a potatoe patch and garden, altho’ at that time I doubt if I knew a potatoe plant if I saw one. I was of course tired and no doubt hungry, and after waiting what seemed like an endless time I became worried as to what was taking place and as to why no wagon was returning, for I was just out of sight of the house. Had I known Mrs. Murray then as I came to know her later, I would have known that it would have been impossible for her to allow anyone to leave her home without first having some tea or something to eat, so of course this is what was causing the delay. Finally becoming afraid I was being forgotten and left stranded, and too scared to approach the house, I started to cry and shortly after George arrived on the scene to drag me angry and struggling and crying into the shack. Jean, Connie and Artie were sitting at the table eating bread and jam and looking very surprised at me and wondering what all the fuss was about, not realizing that I was expecting to get a “going over” for having disobeyed. Surprisingly for me nothing like this happened and soon calmed down and was stuffing myself with bread and jam like the rest. No doubt I was very tired and hungry having trudged some three miles or over. Mr. Murray “who later became dad Murray to everybody” was not at home, nor were the two older boys. Jack and George, so I didn't see them at this time, but this visit was to be the first of many in the future, and the Murrays have remained friends always. The trip hone was definitely more enjoyable for me now peace had been resored, and I was feeling quite proud of myself supposedly driving the team, but of course they would have automatically gone home if no one had been driving.

That evening must have been quite a home coming dispite the fact that both us and our belongings were as yet just heaped into the shack and now Nell had arrived we

soon had some piano music which was a very vital part of the early days and everybody sang whether their ability to do so was very good or not. So different from present days when we all sit around the television like bumps on a log and watch and listen to the writhing squirming objects floating around, endeavouring to create some sort of melody, but only succeeding in making a hideous noice, while banging and crashing and shreiking instruments do their very best to drown out the supposedly singing artists. It was later this night when we were all settled down to sleep. Most of us I remember, with the mattresses directly on the floor “as we had brought no bedsteads with us.”

We were suddenly awakened by loud squawking and fluttering of chickens. As before our dozen or so chickens had been temporarily housed the case the piano was shipped in, until some better accommodation could be built for them. It was thought that the lid or cover had been held precariously in position by a crow-bar or a piece of iron pipe we had brought with us for some reason, and that some slight movement of the hens had caused this to roll off, releasing the cover and scaring the life out of the chickens. The first thought was of wolves as they seemed to be the only animals in the country who we thought might be dangerous. Actually they weren’t, and it was seldom if ever we saw one, but the howling that went on at nights was quite frightening “At least to me as a kid” until we had become accustomed to it and took no notice. Usually it sounded like a huge pack of dozens, when probably it was merely a couple having a talk together. But to get back to the story, dad and the three boys dashed madly outside, one of them with our only weapon of defense which was a little 22 rifle. Of course there was no sign of “Mr. Wolf”, but much time was spent by catching and gathering the chickens who has spread in all directions. My uncle who was naturely nervous had not gone out with the others exclaimed “Shut the door the brute will be in here in a minute”. This of course caused quite a laugh for some time afterwards, for as far as anyone knows no wolf has ever been known to enter a home with the exception of the one in the tale of Little Red Riding Hood and most certainly not a prairie coyote who would usually slink off at the first sight of man.

When all the hens had been captured and peace again restored, George remained outside with the rifle in case the marauder should return for his lost supper, but when later a shot rang out through the trees it was just that George had got cold and tired and gave up the vigil.

The following days were spent in getting the shack into some sort of order. Dad doing most of it while the boys got busy on erecting some sort of shelter for oxen and chickens, and in the evenings building themselves some “aboard ship” bunks in one of the bedrooms as a means of conserving as much space as possible. I remember they even put names on them, using the metal stencils dad had used to put the names and destinations on all out stuff. For some reason they didn’t use their own names, but names of places in the old country.

After making the essential things like table and benches and a bedstead, dad built corner shelves for the books, we had bought all kinds of them and they sur were worth a lot to us in the first two or three years. There were three big books of David Copperfield, Nicolas Nickelby and the Old Curiosity Shop, and they were crammed with illustrations of people in bygone days who wore long hair as it is seen today, only that it was better groomed and even the farmers and fishermen didn't appear such a disheveled mess as is seen with our young people now. The men wore tight skinny pants such as the school boys wore a few years ago. I waded through all these books after I had exhausted the supply of boys books, but you may be sure I was unable to read or pronounce many of the long words and considerable skipping was done. It was interesting to me a couple of years ago to again read David Copperfield as I had not done so since reading it as a boy. I saw it once on film, but the story is far too long for a show and they only got in half of it.

Later we unpacked our pictures, "we had brought scads of them and miraculously none of them were broken. These were hung up between the 2 x 4 scantlings and the place began to look like a picture gallery.

There was also some clocks. I think dad must have had a mania for collecting old clocks in his travels over the continent where his work took him, for he had many clocks mostly of French or European make, some of the pendulum type and some balance wheel type, but most of them not in working condition and only usefull for their looks or whatever way one might refer to a clock, and it was only for this reason they were hauled out and set up in some place. The only one that would run and was therefore usefull was the one we always had on our kitchen mantle piece in England, and mother said it was a coachman's clock. Coachmen who drove for the rich families in her day would have the clock on the driver's seat with them so that there was no excuse for not being "on time". Mother knew this as she had worked for such a family in the capacity of the nurse and governess for the children, and from time to time travelled with them on trips and holidays. This clock always intrigued me as it was in a glass case and one could see the works of it. It was again enclosed in a square padded case of possibly wood or metal for protection and had a sliding door over the face to be removed while it was in use on the coach. I remember I periodically worried mother to lift it out of the case so as I could see the wheels moving.

But I am wandering off a bit here so I must get back to the job of distributing our belongings around the shack which if nothing else served to make things look a little like home, and from that time on our shack took on the status of "the house". It might be best at this point to somewhat describe the land and surroundings on our section, and for that matter it was much the same in the whole district.

It was almost solid bush excepting where there was sloughs, and there seemed to be far too much of that to make a good grain growing country which seemed to be everyone's ambition, altho' it was better suited to stock raising and previously had been used in that way by the few ranchers that were in the country before it was

thrown open for homesteading. We could still see in places, signs of where they had plowed fire guards around their hay stacks, and which were then almost completely obliterated. There were a few open spaces of high land which appeared to be of fair size but as they were completely surrounded by trees it became deceiving, and later when we plowed and measured these spaces they turned out to be about half the size as originally thought.

The trees, although they grew thickly together only had a diameter of between four and six inches and it was quite a job to find anything heavy enough for building purposes. There had at one time been very heavy bush there, as one would run across old dead and decaying logs up to a foot and over through, and we used the sound parts of this stuff for fuel purposes otherwise we should have had lots of fun keeping the place warm as naturally we had no seasoned wood. However it had been necessary to cut trees down to build the shack and also later to build a stable so one might say we had only to reach out the door to get some fuel. The first building was just a small place just big enough to keep the ox team and the few chickens in for the time being and later was used for the hens only.

Uncles's shack was the next job but it was first necessary to establish where his quarter section was. One might think this would be comparatively easy to do, but when there is miles of similar looking bush and absolutely nothing else but the sun or stars for one to orient themselves with it is difficult to tell where one is within some distance and many people easily became lost. The sections were marked at each corner by an iron rod or stake but the divisions of the quarters were only by wooden stakes and the majority of these had rotted and fallen over. The system of the surveyors was to dig four holes in the form of a six foot square but in such a manner that each hole was located on a quarter section. The earth from these holes was thrown to the centre making a mound in which the stake was driven. These markings became referred to as "Iron Mounds" or "Wooden Mounds". When our shack was built the mound on the north west corner of dad's homestead had by necessity been located and a short line some two or three hundred yards had been cut due south from it to make certain the shack was built on the right quarter section. There were incidents in those days where people had put their buildings on other peoples property or perhaps half way across the line.

This then was our point to start from and to eventually locate all the boundaries on the four quarter sections and used up many weeks of time during the winter. The method was to use a compass and set up stakes in line and as near as we could see in the exact direction. This required much bush cutting to be able to sight along the stakes and when this had been done for what was calculated to be half a mile, it was then measured as accurately as was possible by tape or long piece of wire or rope of a given length. It was almost impossible for this system to have any degree of accuracy but having somewhat determined the area where the mound should be, it was just a case of milling around in a circle until someone discovered it, and then recutting and adjusting. Once this was done we were at the N. W. corner of uncles homestead and it

was just necessary to carry the line on for a few yards or until a suitable spot to build was located to the east side of it.

As a bunch of big city people we were not too dumb about catching on to getting and keeping our directions by the points of the compass or by sun and stars compared to "Turn left and Turn right" of the city, but many people were not so good at it and some became lost. None of us became completely lost that winter altho' at times we found ourselves not coming out at the exact spot we expected to, but very soon got our bearings. Some years later Nell became lost while hunting the cows, but that was because darkness came on and the stars were clouded over.

You will notice that during this narrative I keep saying "we or us" in regard to our movements or to various operations of work that were done. You may be sure that I didn't do any of it, or have the least say about it, as I was far too young, but it seemed at that time that as we were more or less isolated that everything done or considered was entered into by all as a group, and although I was too young to do any work to speak of I was always present when ever possible, running around like a dog at a farm auction sale and generally getting in the way of things. I may have been of some help at times as I was very curious and vitally interested, as all that went on was completely new and exciting to me and I liked to get my hand in where ever possible to do something or help with the chores, and seemed to take some sort of pride in being the last one into the house at night. I should not have been so enthusiastic had I realized that within a year or two I should be up to my ears in chores, and become completely fed up and continued to detest them. As we all got older the three elder boys got to the point where simple chores such as carrying wood and water, hunting cows and milking, were beneath them and light chores were kids stuff. They were the big shots who did only the important farm work, and were the prime producers and to care for their teams was the limit of chores for them. And so it was that Nell and I became the chief force where chores were concerned, and this condition remained for many years till after we were grown up as there were no younger ones other than Muriel to take over. Our family to some extent seemed to be chopped in half, with the coming of Nell the train of boys was for the time being stopped, and when I arrived, on the scene J was an odd one and was not classed with the elder three as there were some seven years or so between Arthur and me. Consequently when mother and dad spoke of "the Boys" or when outsiders referred to the "Dean Boys" it did not in any way include me.

I have recently had feelings of amusement when in the late sixties there suddenly sprung to life a lot of silly talk about the; "Generation Gap" and that attempts should be made to close it, as tho' this was some brand new epidemic of sorts that had just cropped up that no one had seen or experienced before. Young folks especially could not seem to realize that this was something that had gone on since the beginning of time and that no where is the feeling more noticable than in our Universities where the ignorant and arrogant smart aleck pipsqueaks of second year students try to ridicule and abuse the first year students by their "Frosh Weeks" and general attitude.

I was nine years old by this time but nine year olds don't think or worry much about what is going to happen to the future, but are only concerned with what happens from day to day, and go blissfully along with the assurance that Mum and Dad will produce three meals and a bed each day and supply all the necessary clothes and other necessitates of life. I was living the Life of Riley. No school to attend and everything was interesting – trees to walk through, new places to see and the freedom of being able to go anywhere at will. Building huge bon fires and seeing trees felled by the others, and come crashing down with branches and twigs flying in every direction. Watching logs being snaked out by logging chain and the process of making them into a building. All this was wonderful when one doesn't realize that in time it will be commonplace and most of it hard work.

We got our hay for Buck and Bright from Tingleys. They, and the Lockharts, had come some time before us and were well established, "1904 Charlie tells me". I can only remember being at Tingleys once and this must have been one of these trips for hay, mother and Nell and I were along. It seemed to me they had a big log house, and also a big team of oxen called Lion and Charlie. Lion seemed much larger than Charlie and was a huge animal as far as I thought, when compared to our team who were on the small side, and as yet barely full grown. I remember being in the house to get warm while the hay was being loaded and looking out through the window to see Mr. Tingley striding briskly towards the house, stopping on the way at the wood pile to pull a pole up to the chopping block and cutting off an armful of stove wood in record time, and I thought, he must be a real expert with the axe. This like many other things was only in comparison with dad and the boys, and it was certainly that in the short time that they had been engaged in bush work they could not have become very adept in handling axes.

One amusing little incident that took place not long after we arrived might be worth recording. It was while dad and the boys were out cutting the line to ascertain where Uncles quarter was, and I don't remember who got the bright idea, but somehow, Mother, Nell or I got the notion that it would be fun for us to show the others what we could do on our own by hitching the oxen to the wagon and going down the trail to a point where they were working and giving them a ride home to supper. We got the harness on the oxen all right as ox harness was not very complicated but to get the bits in the oxens mouths was something else. They objected strongly for as yet they were by no means accustomed to being oxen in the true sense, but we finally made it after much frustrating and loss of temper caused by our lack of experience and "know how", for like all greenhorns we stood in front of them and tried to push the bits in from that position which resulted in them merely turning their heads to the side and backing away. The correct method is to stand at the side and just back of the animals head and place one arm over the top of the neck. This gives one better control, even if in stubborn cases one becomes dragged around a bit. It was simple from then on to hitch the wagon, lend then out onto the trail and headed in the right direction, we then climbed aboard the wagon and were on our way. It was not to be so simple. For some reason which we were unable to figure out, one ox persisted in walking out on the side

of the trail instead of on it, and this condition could not go on for long without the wagon wheel connecting with a tree, as much of the trail was narrowly cut through the trees. No amount of pulling on the lines seemed to persuade the team back onto the trail again, so it was only moments until they had again taken up their odd position on the trail, and after correcting this for about three times with no success it became apparent that there was some- thing queer going on, and it finally dawned on me what the trouble was.

In case anyone reading this should not be familiar with animals, it should be pointed out that where-ever there are two or a group, it is characteristic of them that they immediately establish who is boss and woe betide any who dare to trespass on the territory of one with higher rank, they will be promptly hooked out of the way, this is the law of all nature which is the survival of the fittest. This then, was the root of our trouble for I then noticed that we had in error hitched them on opposite sides to which they were accustomed, and the boss of the team was bent and bound that he would travel on his own side of the trail, and while it appeared to us that the one ox wanted to walk on the side of the trail, it was actually that he was being forced to do so.

The mystery having been cleared up the problem was soon solved by us unhitching and leading the oxen to their respective sides. The harness also had to be changed from one to the other in order to get the cross lines of the driving lines in their proper positions. From then on there was no trouble at all and we arrived to find the men folk already quit for the day and staring on the way home, for we had wasted considerable time by all the difficulty we had run into. No doubt the others appreciated the ride home after their afternoon's work, but they were not so pleased that there was no supper ready for them when we all arrived home.

In stories of pioneer days one may read many stories concerning ox teams and their failings as beasts of burden, most of them "stretched a bit" and most of them putting them blame on the animals when it really should be on them- selves for their lack of understanding common sense and kindness towards animals.

Oxen laying down and refusing to move, obviously driven beyond their endurance. Teams running into sloughs taking wagon and driver with them and miring the wagon so as it had to be unloaded before it could be extracted from the mud. Here again a case of insuffient water and feed being given.

For city greenhorns we must have had some sort of horse sense, as not once did I see any of our teams act in anyway out of normal although it was quite common that at the end of a long trip that on being stopped they would immediately lay down even if they were still hitched, but after a short rest there was no trouble in getting them going again. Oxen were by no means a good form of power or transportation. They were naturally slow and inclined to be stubborn and did not answer very readily to being steered and also got winded much quicker than horses. However like horses, steam

tractors, Model T Fords, candles and kerosene lamps they were good in their day and served the purpose under the prevailing conditions of that time.

A few homesteaders brought horses with them thinking they would have the lead on those who were less well fixed financially, but in only a few cases did this work out. Horses need oats to be kept in good condition and that is what no one had, or in many cases could afford even if they were available from some source or other. Also they did not act well in the soft muddy sloughs we were obliged to cross at times, Oxen have cloven feet which spread out when pressed into mud to become smaller as they are with-drawn and so cause no problem.

Horses on the other hand have solid hoofs which may act as suckers and are difficult to with-draw which in turn creates panic that may end up by them being mired and coming to a bad end. One other thing which becomes a draw back in a new country and especially a bushy one where there are no fences or obstructions for miles, is that horses turned out to graze may run for miles and then be very hard to locate when needed. Ike Preston, a farmer from Manitoba had a nice four horse team, but seemed to spend much of the first summer in walking around with halter shanks and a can of oats looking for his horses, and contacting neighbors to inquire if they had seen his horses and at the same time spending an hour or so in talking to each one. This was all very entertaining but did not go well towards getting the plowing done for the following year's crop.

Oxen, on the other hand, altho' slower and harder to work with, could fare quite well during the summer months on the available and natural feed if not driven beyond their limit of endurance, and in general cope with all the conditions of the rough environment. This then was power at no expense which is most vital under circumstances where there is no other sourse of income. We were not to meet very many people in this first winter. Firstly because there were as yet few settlers in the district and also because we were well to the eastern edge of the Rama district. Secondly distances were long between neighbors and towns and transportation was mostly by walking as this appeared to be easiest unless it was necessary to haul a load.

Dad and the elder boys got to know a few people where they were obliged to go for various purposes, but for the rest of the family there was little connection with the outside world. This was especially so for me, as being a kid and not a very husky one at that I didn't get very far, for as the snow got deep and the weather got cold, and even the shortest trips were long, it seemed I would either freeze to death while riding or wear myself out by walking through the snow and become a darned nuisance, so I was in most cases left at home. The same thing applied to mother and Nell altho' I believe we did make a couple of trips to the Murrays as they were our nearest neighbors being only two miles away, altho' by the way the trail wound about it must have been considerably more. As it became colder we were able to cross on the ice in the sloughs, but there were still the trees and bushes to wind around and we had not

as yet get to figuring out a few short cuts as we did later. My only contact with people was by remote control, which was by listening to the boys and dad when they returned from the various trips they made for the mail in most cases, for as there was nothing at Rama ours was coming to Invermay and it was customary for anyone who happened ,to be at Invermay to bring everyones mail to the nearest point so that it could be picked up by those at more distant points. We usually got ours at Jack Meakins as he had horses and could make the trip easier than everyone else, so he generally brought mail for Murrays and McLennans, Ike Preston; Richardsons, Wrights and ourselves.

I seem to think that before spring came that John Berg had obtained the office of Postmaster and the mail was contained in his house.

Actually I din't get to know anyone in the district with the exception of Murrays and McLennans until the following summer when a Sunday school was started at the home of the Prestons who lived on the Rama road and about half a mile up from the intersection of the Buchanan road. These cross roads, or perhaps I should say "this point" was the N. E. corner of Doug. Whitmans homestead, and the Pelly trail passed quite closeby there, and this point in the trail became known as "Doug's mound", but later when fences started to appear, as "Doug's corner". I remember once that dad and one, or perhaps all three of the boys went to Invermay. It was probably a combination of circumstances which involved the opportunity of a ride with Jack Meakin, the need of some supplies and to pick up the mail. There was also a council meeting in someone's house which they were going to attend, for the town of Invermay was well established at this time and they were forming, "or I think it had already been formed", a local improvement district which covered an area reaching beyond our homesteads and was later to become the rural municipality of Invermay.

I remember many of these incidents of long ago because of certain happenings or Something spoken which appealed to my childish fancy and perhaps like many other children stand at the edge of some operation or within hearing of some conversation and take in all the details of some project or the highlights in some conversation, and later come out with it all, and as I was also something of a mimic it usually caused some slight amusement amongst the family. In this particular case I was listening to dad's description of their trip and all that took place as he told it to the ones at home – How while at the council meeting he had been astonished at the way some lippy seventeen year old had been talking back to the council members, for dad had brought us up to understand that young people should always respect their elders in every case. But he was not amiss in seeing the comical side of anything and gave a bit of a laugh when relating that this young "Up- start" as he called him on rounding on some member of the council had finished up by saying "So put that in your pipe and smoke it". This I thought was very funny and smart and afterwards it came out quite often in my ructions with other members of the family.

This impetuous youngster who had been carrying on like the modern present day university student, turned out to be Gladstone Ferrie whom we were to get to know a

lot of for a very long time. He became chummy with Arthur and some person “I don’t remember who” suggested to mother that he might lead Arthur astray, and that she discourage the friendship, however, as we all got to know “Glad” as he was always called, neither mother or dad could see anything seriously bad in him only that he was not quite grown up yet and they excepted him into our home and found him good natured, respectful and very generous. He was a frequent visitor in our home while we were still all there together and perhaps his friendship with Arthur helped to modify some of his somewhat racical ideas. The two of them were quite venturesome, and anything could happen when they got together, altho’ nothing ever occurred of a very serious nature. They remained life long friends and were at the first world war together. Later Glad. Became a prominent figure in the Invermay district being councilor and reeve for some time and did much community work in the district. He finally achieved his boyish ambition to become a member in the Federal Parliament. I was never able to find out whether he told the Prime Minister to “Put that in his pipe and smoke it”.

Being in the class of children who were supposed to be seen and not heard, I was of course not made aware of what was to take place until it happened, but it was thought that there would have to be a fair sized stable built. One with four stalls in it to accommodate Buck and Bright and future stock we might get and there was the chance of someone wishing to stay over night. It would of course have to be logs and this set off a hunt for some. One would have thought this would be quite simple, but anything suitable for logs were only isolated little pockets that had somehow missed the fire many years before, and these were so closely surrounded by the present new growth as to be quite difficult to see, and it was mostly by chance that they were stumbled upon, and often not many in a cluster. Some were eventually located down on John’s quarter and were duly cut and hauled home on the wagon. We had a few inches of snow then and I remember how disagreeable to me was the sound of the wagon wheels squeaking and crunching through the snow. I thought it was the most desolate disagreeable sound ever, especially when one felt numb with the cold.

It was this project of building the stable which again brought us in contact with Jack Upex again, but this time not socially and with kindly words of advice. He was bubbling over with rage. It had turned out that in error we had cut our logs on his quarter. Both quarters were side by side, and as yet no lines had been cut, so that it was very near impossible to gauge ones position with any degree of accuracy. These errors were made quite frequently in the early days, and people were known to build their shacks on someone elses quarter or perhaps only part way across the line. I remember in the case of our shack it was found when we finally got the property line into its exact position that it was some twenty five yards further in on dad’s place than we had thought. It was found later when the lines had been properly cut that this stand of logs was a mere fifty yards in on the Upex place. Jack may have located them previously and earmarked them for the construction of his own shack, and it was the last straw to find them missing when he went to collect them. It was therefore quite simple to

locate the thieves by the process of following the wagon tracks which ended up in our yard.

The long walk had only served to increase his anger, for he was certain the logs had been deliberately stolen. His accusation when he confronted dad and the boys, and "of course myself for I was sure to be hanging around on the side lines" created some mixed feelings, Arthur thought it was a big joke and started to laugh about it and was later told off by John who said he was acting like an idiot, George and dad were more concerned that he might air his opinion around the district And get us thought of as a rough lot. I of course was first a little scared, but as the tumult subsided to some extent I became more interested in Jack Upex queer Lancaster dialect and his funny way of saying "Ah" in the place of yes. He stormed up and down as a means of putting the fear into us and kept interspersing his conversation with "Well I shall go to Sheho" which came out more like "I shall go to Sheow". Sheho being the closest point where one might contact the arm of the law, but when the whole rumpus had subsided it was very simply settled by dad and the three boys finding and cutting him some more logs and later attending the raising bee to build his shack, and Jack afterwards remarked to someone "AH, Mr. Dean is pretty good at puttin' in them doors and windows".

Jack seemed quite a queer character to me, and perhaps he was to others too. He was well blessed with rumpled hair and whiskers at a time when these things were going out, and the clean shaven period was coming in, and he seemed continually dirty and was suspected of being lousy so that none cared to sit too close to him. He had a son a few years older than the Murray boys and I, and he seemed equally as disheveled and dirty. He was also "John" but mostly got "Johnnie" although his dad always referred to him as "the old boy". It was said that when a baby he had fallen and hurt his neck, and this caused him to slightly hang his head when he raised it to speak to anyone it gave him a somewhat furtive look. This caused many people to think that he was a bit simple, while actually he was very smart and had a great sense of humor for a youngster, but like all us kids he had no schooling to speak of. It was funny to see them travelling some place. Old John would be walking along and some five or six paces behind him would be young Johnnie following him. Indeed a queer pair.

Then there was "Old Granny" who lived with them, I think she must have been old John's wife's mother who may have come to live with them to care for the boy when his mother died. She always addressed old John quite abruptly as just plain "Upex", which appeared a bit odd to me, but later I have thought that perhaps she had resented old John marrying her daughter and really had a poor opinion of him, but had lived with them strictly on account of the boy. She evidently couldn't take the rough life on the homestead and passed away about the second year. I could tell several amusing incidents concerning them, but I have already wandered too far afield from our first winter in Canada.

The stable when ahead fairly well with four men working at it, and as neither had any experience in constructing log buildings you may be sure it was somewhat crudely built

and didn't last many years. In the first place the logs were completely green and unpeeled and there was no foundation, the logs being set directly on the frozen ground. It was a conventional type of that time accommodating eight animals, two stalls at each end with the passage at the centre and two doors, one facing the yard and the opposite one leading to the hay stack yard. A gabled roof made of poles and the following summer covered with sods, which was warm and shed "or should I say absorbed" light showers, but eventually leaked in long and heavy rains. I remember there were only enough boards left to make one door and the other was constructed by laboriously splitting some poles and somehow assembling them crudely together with the only nails available which were of the wrong size, and ending up with a very cumbersome and sagging affair so that it was a major operation to either open or close it. This was replaced by a proper door as soon as we were able to get some lumber. We had brought with us an auger one inch in size, "but an inch and a half would have been better", for the purpose of pinning the logs together here and there, and that thing sure worked overtime, as did dad's brace and bits for we seemed to be continually running short of nails and spikes, so pins and pegs were used as a means of "getting by" in many cases.

The spaces between the logs were filled with cow manure which was in short supply with only two oxen. The roof for the time being was covered with hay, but sooner than use our feed supply we cut with a scrub sythe the stiff long hay and reeds from the slough edges which so far had not been pressed down by the snow. It seemed to take a lot of time and work, but that didn't matter too much as time was what we had lots of, and the money which would normally be spent on construction was what we didn't have.

All homesteading had to be carried out under this system of avoiding the out lay of money by utilizing the material resources and using all the ingenuity that one could muster. There were very few who came with huge amounts of money, and if they did they didn't file on homesteads for the purpose of farming, but set themselves up in business of some kind, and in this way obtained their living from the less fortunate, while holding their homestead as an investment for later use. Most people were like ourselves and were immigrants hoping to improve their lot in a new country which was reported to have wonderful opportunities. Other people of Canadian origin were those who had lost out, or had in some manner been pushed out of their former occupations and were obliged to seek different work and different territory, so that the well advertised homesteading scheme seemed like the land of milk and honey or the promised land, and especially so to those who like ourselves did not have the slightest conception of what they were up against. This of course accounted for the fact that there appeared to be so many missfits, oddballs, and queer characters amount the population of the various districts. Some of them appeared to be those who had taken off into the wilds to rid themselves of some drinking habit or something of similar nature, and expected they might do so in this manner.

Then there was the odd remittance man who was or appeared to be no use to himself or anyone else. The Doukhobors were a class of Russians who supposedly came to obtain religious freedoms and did very well for themselves, as they were more adapted to the conditions that prevailed in this country at that time. They were good honest and industrous people most of them, but a certain section of them later caused trouble which had broken out periodically up to the present time. I have since come to the conclusion that they were not driven from their native land on account of their religious beliefs, but because of their unlawful, extreme and radical ways.

Perhaps the best off of our early settlers were the young men in their late teens or early twenties who came partly for the adventure, and partly to get started in a brand new country. They were completely free, and had no encumbrances such as wives or families and could go and come as they pleased and had absolutely no responsibility to others and could come or go, give up or stay with it. The worst off were men with young families who on reaching the point where they had established a home of sorts, which was barely more than a roof over their heads, found they had reached the end of their financial resources and so the point of no return. They were then stuck with the task of making every effort to utilize the natural resources, and use their ingenuity to cope with every problem that presented itself in order to obtain some sort of existence.

We were partly in this last mentioned category, but had the advantage that the elder member of the family "or part of them" could leave to obtain work and so keep the pot boiling.

The Murray family fared worse as their family was quite young, Jack the eldest, being only one and a half years older than myself.

The time arrived when we were going to be forced into taking a trip to Buchanan which was then our nearest point to get our supplies. We had now got a little more snow so that our wagon which we could still use for short trips into the woods, became unsuitable for a trip of any length. I have wondered many times since then why we did not bring a set of sleighs with us, as it seemed to be something we should need for all time. Perhaps it was ignorance, as in the past we had never experienced snow more than an inch or two, or perhaps at the time we moved there was no thought of snow, but George should have known, as he had already experienced one winter. Anyhow the fact remained that we didn't have a set, so the alternative was to borrow a set. Borrowing was carried on to a great extent in those early days, as no one had everything, but some did have things that others didn't, and in turn others had things that they didn't, so it was only natural that each would accommodate the other, and though no one likes to lend their possessions it became a necessity that everyone was involved in.

When the Buchanan trip was arranged two of the boys went over to McLennans to borrow his sleighs. He had a good set, for as he was a blacksmith he had constructed them himself. They arrived home with Mc's sleighs and team also, and our team was

left at Mac's. Whether this arrangement was preplanned I don't know, Mac may have offered the team, as ours were young and a little on the light side as they were not yet three years old. Perhaps he thought he might save our lives, as it was our first trip and being all greenhorns someone could well have come to grief if the weather became bad, or some unforeseen trouble popped up. Mac's were a good team of red and white steers and their names were "Nip and Tuck."

I don't remember too much about this trip for with the coming of the deeper snow and the increasing cold, everything was out for me excepting comparatively short trips, much to my disgust of course. I don't remember who went, but probably dad and two of the boys, and they were long gone when I woke in the morning having started out when it was yet dark, and arriving home long after dark. However there was no serious trouble, but it was a long tiresome and cold trip, for altho' it was only nine miles straight east it must have been several miles more by the wandering Pelly trail. The Pelly trail was a freighting trail between Fort Pelly and Fort Qu'Appelle before the time of the railroads and wandered aimlessly along the ridges, through the trees and skirted the edges of sloughs. At times it was obliged to cross ravines and necks between sloughs and these were good spots to become mired in the mud in the wet Season. At this time there was no worry in this respect, as it was frozen everywhere and one could in some cases take short cuts across the sloughs on the ice. The first five miles were through solid bush with no settlers within that distance, and it was very unlikely that there would be any sign of someone elses sleigh track. The bush played out suddently at this point as the trail ran into Doukhobor territory which had been settled for some years, so there were no trees, and Buchanan could be seen several miles before one arrived there. The Pelly trail became obliterated through that area so it was a case of following trails from farm to farm.

I am pretty sure on this trip that lumber for Uncle’s shack was hauled out, and it was certainly that besides our own supplies there would be some to get for some of the neighbors, so trips to town generally required much more time there than was necessary to feed and rest the team.

During the winter we must have made at least two more trips with our own team and I am pretty sure that Mum went on one of them for she was game for anything and I expect she was fed up with being away from everything and everybody for no doubt the longest period in her life. We three young ones were in the same boat, except for a couple of trips to Murrays who were not too far away. It was the following spring before I got to see Buchanan, and the following fall before I saw Rama.

Perhaps I could run ahead of this story to describe my first trip to Buchanan which was in late spring as George had to go in to bring out a new disc which was to level and work up our kitchen garden and our little oat field which in turn we hoped would supply enough seed for the following year. It was decided I could go this time as the weather was now fine and I expect I had been worrying for the chance to go. It was a big event to me, as up till then I only know of these trips by description from the others, so there

was no trouble in getting me up bright and early to get started, in fact I doubt whether I had slept very well with the excitement of the trip.

The trail was fairly good now excepting that the water was still fairly high in the sloughs and low spots that we obliged to cross, but the oxen would wade through all of it with no trouble at all as long as the wagon did not sink into the mud too much, but it was necessary to judge how much of a load it might be possible to haul on the return trip, and to try and remember where the worst spots were, which was a bit hard to do as there were plenty of them. Under conditions at that time a full load would only be about half of what one could haul on a good road.

We had one advantage that the traffic was little or none, so that any soft spots had not become churned up previously as became the trouble in later days, and many of the sloughs which normally grew hay were fairly solid on the bottom, but the odd one was of the muskeg type and therefore a bit treacherous. Such a one was where Charlie Lockhart had lost a team of horses the previous year and the remains were still slightly visible. This spot became known as Lockharts slough, and there was another bad spot which later mother nick' named the "slough of despond" which I believe is mentioned in the book of "Pilgrims Progress".

I remember my surprise at coming out to the open country around Buchanan. It seemed like a vast plain to me after being surrounded with bush all winter, and to see the grain elevators of Buchanan so far in the distance it seemed we should never get there. It was certainly not as far as it seemed to me, but it was still a long way for we had to bear to the north for quite a distance in order to get a crossing over the Whitesand river or creek, or what ever it was, and then pass through a Doukhobor village and so approach Buchanan from the north. I was getting pretty travell weary and hungry by the time we rolled down the main street and I expect Buck and Bright were too, so after watering and feeding them and taking a drink at the well ourselves, we went round to the hotel for dinner as that was the only place to go anyhow. It cost twenty-five cents for a meal and it was a good one too. I found the reverse of things a little later when I bought myself five cents worth of common candy and found I got only slightly more than I would have for a cent in England.

I immediately became conscious of my old clothes and felt very shy in speaking to other people or being spoken to. I don't know whether this feeling was from seeing no one but the family all winter, but suspect I was always that way, for I have been that way ever since. The store we dealt at was called the "Yorkton Supply". The manager was Mr. Hopkins, commonly called Teddy, and there were two clerks, Pinkerton and Richardson, but quite young fellows then, but I remembered and saw Pinkerton many years later when he was Mayor of Yorkton.

The stock of the store consisted of the main essentials of that time and seemed "and was" totally different to what I remembered of the English shops. The basic groceries at that time were chiefly flour, oatmeal, beans, dried fruit, cheese, crackers and

sardines being among the delicacies. Even the candies were horrible common things and consisted of a mixture of coarse jellies and sugars, and were shipped in by wooden pailfulls. The candies were varied by some coarse chocolate creams and unshelled peanuts.

We finally got all our groceries gathered together which consisted of the above mentioned things along with a can of coaloil for the lamps. The oil at that time had not received the fancy name of “kerosene” and was a very poor grade.

I wanted very much to see a train pull into the station, but was unable to do so as passenger trains passed in the morning or night, and freights were few and far between. The new disc was duely loaded, knocked down of course, but painted with green, red, and yellow colors which made it very impressive and exciting to me, altho’ it was a complete monkey puzzle to me as I had not seen one before.

George in his conversation with Richardson at the store and who lived on his homestead just west of Buchanan, had learned that there was a bridge being built over the Whitesand river and there was a possible chance it might be completed by this time, so he decided to take the risk of going that way and so cutting off several miles of travel. It was indeed a risk, as if we were unable to cross the bridge we should have to return some miles and again proceed the long way around which would put a greater strain on the team and waste many hours of time for we were well on to late afternoon.

The road on the township line west from Buchanan was somewhat built at that time to the point where it crossed the railroad, but from there on there were just a few wagon tracks quite likely made by the road gang who were constructing the bridge. and we followed these until we arrived at the bridge which was not a great distance. Stopping just short of it we got down and walked up to inspect it and see what our chances were of crossing. The bridge was made of poplar logs flattened to some extent on the top and was completed excepting that the approaches had not been put in. Willow bushes and small trees had been piled in on either side of the bridge and covered with a thick layer of straw in preparation for a fill of earth. I expected the oxen would tread through the straw and scrub and become hopelessly entangled, or failing that become frightened to go onto the bridge deck. George figured that teams would be obliged to cross over in order to put on the earth fill, so why shouldn’t we be able to, and if I was to remain on the bridge the oxen would be less liable to take fright at the planking. So while I stood trembling on the bridge George started the team and drove them across with out the least bit of trouble, altho’ I expect he was also relieved to be on the other side.

Our concern was not all over by any means, as we now had some three miles or so of completely strange territory to get over before we again contacted the Pelly trail and altho’ it was comparatively open country it was dotted with small clumps of willows everywhere, and we had to make it while we had daylight. I drove the team and

George went as far ahead as he could without losing sight of me to scout out our way in the general direction and waved me on, or motioned me to stop if the way appeared impossible for us to get through. Fortunately we made it quite well, and didn't have too much back tracking or turning off to do but struck into the Pelly trail well before dark. Quite likely we were the first ones to travel that section of the township road that was to become the original number five highway until it was rerouted as it is today parallel to the railroad.

We had still halfway to go, altho' we had saved a few miles, and we made the rest of the trip without incident. I of course had been thrilled with the trip and was dashing madly back and forth to unload the groceries and such things as we had bought, but in my haste tried to enter the house without first opening the screen door and was brought to a sudden and painful stop. However there was no serious damage to either me or the screen door. So that was my first of many trips to Buchanan, for it remained our chief town for several years altho' Rama became our point of mailing. But that was just a glance into the future and does not really belong in this story, so we must now get back to our first winter.

Christmas was approaching which is always an exciting time for the young ones. But this one was to be so totally different from previous Xmases that there was absolutely no resemblance to the times when we hung up our stockings on Xmas eve and found them bulging with presents and bags of candy and fruit, and Xmas day and Boxing day would be the one time of year when we would have the relatives of either Mum's or Dad's family with us and have a real get together. In this year the day would be much the same as any other day, only that we had the traditional Xmas pudding.

I had hung up my big German socks as usual altho' I had sense enough to know there might be nothing in them, but I remember there was a few nick-nacks probably smuggled in on the trip to Buchanan. The following year I didn't fare so well altho' I had hopefully hung up my socks, but when I reached out in the dark of the morning they were still hanging flat and empty, altho' on closer inspection I found a solitary twenty-five cent piece away down in one toe. I have since wondered what were the thoughts of the grown up members of the family at this time, especially mum and Dad, for we were now down to pretty hard lines. There was neither milk for our tea or butter for our bread. Our potatoes we had bought with us had frozen in the cellar and were being replaced by beans. We had lots of beef as it could be purchased fairly reasonable from the earlier settlers. Four and a half cents per pound for hind quarters, three for fronts, but the sweet stuff consisted principally of dried apples or prunes or corn syrup.

Mother was a fairly good plain cook and had been aided by Mrs. Angus at Hamiota who taught her to bake bread and scotch scones and oat cakes. Also to churn butter and many other things which she had not experienced in the old country. She had a few near failures with bread baking but this was on account of the extreme cold nights. In the course of time and when more ingredients became available both she and Nell

became experts in cooking and handling milk, cream and butter. And speaking of butter, Mother had made and printed into pounds a huge box of butter to bring with us from the Anguses, and it seemed to me that we should have butter forever, as I had been used to seeing it brought into the home in just small amounts. However, with nine people and six of them adults, our butter supply shrunk with amazing swiftness, and on reaching the last tier of pound prints, mother put restrictions on, “Butter on Sundays only”, but even at this it didn’t last long. We had a slight reprieve for on starting the last tier of pounds, it was found there was still one more beneath. I have thought since that we must have been blessed with a mild winter that year, otherwise we might have come near to freezing to death, for we had nothing more than a cook stove to keep that whole fourteen by twenty-eight shack warm. I’ll admit it was a good stove with a husky size fire box and like all early type stoves was not insulated as modern stoves are, so that the heat flooded out in all directions. The stove pipes too ran a good distance along the building before going out through the metal chimney, also there were plenty of men to cut wood, and plenty of wood to be cut, which much have helped a lot, for we must have had to fire full tilt through the cold snaps. As far as storms were concerned we never felt them as we were so closely surrounded by bush and the snow just fell lazily down, but there was no dodging the cold, and perhaps it was to our advantage that we had no such thing as a thermometer to tell us how cold it was, but were only conscious that it was a bit nippy. It was said that people coming from the warmer climates didn’t notice the cold so much on their first winter as their blood was not yet climatized. This may be so as it was quite common for others to remark on the “stupid Englishmen” going around with their mitts off.

It has since almost frightened me to think what risks we were taking in many ways, and of course this applied to all the homesteaders, but perhaps more to us, and some others like us who were experiencing our first winter under circumstances totally unfamiliar to us so that we had no idea of what was about to happen next. Perhaps our ignorance was in a sense a help to us, for as the saying goes, “Where ignorance is bliss, it is folly to be wise”.

I guess we were quite fortunate in many ways for none of us were seriously sick and we had no accidents of any serious nature, but there could quite easily have been chopped toes, frozen hands and feet or many other types of sickness that at that time was many hours away. Such things of course did not worry me in the least, as I figured Mum and Dad would as always be able to cope with any emergency, but I have wondered how the elder members of the family thought about it all and especially for Mum and Dad.

But generally speaking it didn’t seem that anyone was particularly concerned with the rough conditions or became down hearted or fed up. With a large family there is always a lot of good natured joking going around, and also a certain amount of scrapping going on over the division of work and who goes where and does what, so it all adds to the spice of life. There was always lots to do when the weather was fit, because many things required so much more time to do when done in a more or less

primitive manner. Ice had to be cut from the deep sloughs and hauled up to the house where it still had to be cut smaller and melted on the stove for our water supply, and this in turn slowed up the house work and made a long and laborious job of washing floors and clothes – no washing machine of course, just the old scrub board and tub system. Wood had to cut with a buck-saw or chopped with an axe, but the axe system was frowned upon to some extent because it left sharp ends and there was a tendency for it to get too long for the fire box of the stove

We had three coaloil lamps, one a little tiny thing often referred to as a cat's eye, and our main table lamp which was not of the best type being just a straight wick. Round wicks were considered better and threw much more light, but also used about three times as much oil, so we were not to have one of those till some years later, for we were obliged to practice strict economy lest the oil supply should run out before the next trip to town. The stable lantern was much the same as one might see today, altho' they did make some slight improvements on later models. On ours the spring loaded globe had to be pushed up by one's two thumbs to light it. I always had trouble, for while I was quite able to push up the glass with my two thumbs, I had difficulty in holding it there while I struck a match, with the result that just as I was about to apply the match to the wick, the spring would get the best of me and the globe would snap down and put out the match. By the time I had grown big and strong enough to handle this job they had come out with the little lever on the side to raise and hold the globe. There was also a little hole in the framework of the lantern where one could blow in to extinguish it, previously one had to raise the glass. The oil lamps didn't bother us too much though, for we had been used to lamps and candles in England and it was only a couple of years before we left there that dad had gas installed. in due course Uncle's shack was built and he moved down his own which relived the pressure a bit in our home.

There was much time spent in cutting the lines and finding the mounds, for by now the snow was becoming deeper and where there were wooden mounds many of them had rotted and fallen down, and others had been burned by fire so in many cases there was only a slight bump in the snow where the mounds were and the four holes that one might stumble into. But it was very necessary to do this work to get all the boundaries located as when summer came the breaking of land would start, and one had to be sure they were not plowing up some other person's land.

There was one other job that had to be done that winter, and that was to find a shorter way out to the Pelly trail. The trail we were presently using was really an outlet to Buchanan so it went out to the south-east, but most of our neighbors lived to the west, and Rama where we would have to get the mail was north-west. The general idea then was to go in a south-westerly direction across George's homestead and strike the Pelly trail at a point at about at his west line. This required much cutting of bush with only three little open spaces in the whole distance. This trail became known always as the "short cut" and it sure did cut off a lot of mileage and seemed to bring Murrays much closer. Altho' the trees were cut as low as possible it was found when the snow went

off that they weren't very low, and it was a pretty bumpy trail for awhile, until the stumps had all been grubbed out.

It was while this trail was being made that George came to the conclusion that he had picked the worst homestead out of the four, and that most of it consisted of a long chain of sloughs and the rest bush. He was terribly disappointed about this and considered abandoning it and filing on to another, but as it would take much scouting around through the bush it was almost impossible to tell whether any quarter within a reasonable distance would be any better than the one he had, and in which case he might only be jumping out of the frying pan into the fire should he give up what he had.

Some years later tho' he did abandon it and obtained the N. W. quarter of thirty-three which was on the east side of dad's place and would have adjoined it excepting that there was a road allowance between.

With the opening of the short cut and the fact that one could now cross Murray's slough on the ice we seemed to be much closer, and one mild day the whole family came over to see us. They had a red team of oxen. Prince and Duke by name and Dad Murray could be heard hollering at them long before they hove into sight. I think everyone at that time, "and especially those who had formerly lived in the city" enjoyed the freedom of being able to shout and sing to their hearts content without having to consider whether they were disturbing someone. Also they enjoyed being their own boss and not having to toe the line as to starting and quitting, or worry about the security of their occupation. All this freedom, and the general change in their environment was a great help in keeping people happy so that they didn't become down hearted and discouraged. Also the future could not be foreseen, but everyone hoped and thought it must improve and get progressively better, as time went on. Actually it got worse before it got better, and the free feeling gradually disappeared to a great extent as people gathered more stuff around them and had the worry of crops and the responsibility of stock, and the everlasting chores which must be done daily and all year around.

This was the Murray's first trip to our place and there were to be many more over the years, for they have remained our friends always. I guess we had a good visit that day with us kids running around inside and out to see everything there was to be seen, and probably doing a few things we had no business to. The parents too had a lot to discuss about the general goings on and no doubt the conversation would gradually work back to the old country, and for sure dad Murray would have to relate his last trip to Sheho, for he went there mostly for supplies in the first winter. It was a long way, and so was a two day affair in which he would stay overnight with a settler somewhere along the way. He loved to spin out these yarns of people he had met and talked with and interspursed them with a lot of, He sez and I sez, and all the time smoking his pipe which periodically went out during the spectacular part of the story. He would then proceed to light it by striking a match, but would proceed with the story before putting it to his pipe so that eventually it burned down to his gingers and had to be hastily

dropped. The procedure would then start all over again and it some times took three matches before he finally got fired up. They didn't stay late that day as naturally the trail was not good and they wanted to get over most of it before dark. There were many hands to bring the oxen from where they were feeding and get them hitched up and everything ship shape. I remember as they drove off dad Murray turning to say, "Well we ain't got much money, but we do see life" and we heard that expression many times later too.

Someone I remember made me a sleigh from some left over pieces of board and I really got a kick out of that, as I had never experienced anything like it before and was surprised how easily it slipped over the snow and spent the next few days grasping every opportunity to load it with something or haul Muriel around on it. It was then I decided that winter was really the best time of year, and John came back with "Yes, its alright for you, you can stay indoors when it gets cold and stormy". I thought of that many times in later years when I became obliged to go out in all kinds of weather to get things done that must be accomplished regardless of the worst kind of weather.

The hand sleight business was quite something with us youngsters in the next few years, which included hitching dogs to them or catching rides by hitching them to peoples sleighs. This became more interesting if neighbors arrived who had horses, as this meant more speed and it was quite common for callers and visitors on leaving for home to find one or more kids hopefully hanging around with hand sleights to hitch a ride. Sleighs and cutters were judged by us as to whether they were good or bad, merely by what facilities they had for hitching hand sleighs to. The Bain wagon boxes were best, as they had a hardwood piece protruding from the corner where the brace was attached, and this was just right, for the general procedure was to have a long hand sleigh rope and pass it under and over this projection, sit on the sleigh and hold the free end. In this way one had only to let go of the rope to break away. Other vehicles with less convenient hitching points might snarl the rope and cause one to be carried far beyond the desired point before the driver decided to stop and allow one to uncouple, and of course this meant a long walk back.

But my prize hand sleight was one Charlie Lockhart made for me about the second year we were there. It was a good size and he had made it completely with just an axe and a brace and bit. There was not a nail in it. He must have spent no end of time in locating a couple of trees with the roots leading off in such a way that they formed a perfect curve for the runners that were hewn square, as was the deck, and the whole thing was fixed together with willow pegs, a real super deluxe job and I was quite proud of it, and kept it for many years by religiously storing it in the granary in the summer to protect it from the rain and sun.

We had two strangers visit us that first winter. They walked out of the bush into the clearing carrying rifles, so obviously they were out to hunt deer. One was named Blake and the other Jennings. They came in for a meal and a rest and told us they had come from Buchanan. The grown ups had a good talk with them you may be sure, as any

news from outside was relished by us all. They of course could not stay long as they were far from home and daylight hours are short at that time of year. Mother said after they were gone "I noticed when they looked in and saw you two kids, they left their rifles outside". This of course was not the reason, They may have thought we might not like them bringing fire- arms into our home, but principally it was to avoid their rifles sweating by being brought into the warmth. We never saw Blake again, but we were to know Jennings for always. He spent his whole life in Buchanan and we became friends and were involved within the family in many ways. He had a machine agency for most of his years and was Justice of the Peace and became instrumental in the administration of all that went on in connection with the town. He told us later that they didn't get any deer on that trip, which was not surprising, as it seemed there was very little wild life in the district at that time. To see a grouse or rabbit was cause for comment at mealtimes, and only the odd muskrat house was noticed. All three of these became extremely thick in the course of the next few years and later disappeared more or less suddenly. Wolves we heard but never saw. Wild ducks were very plentiful in the following summer.

I think it was only twice that I visited the Murray farm that winter, and I remember their first little shack. A little square lumber building, and so small that I wondered how they could possibly all get in along with all their goods and chattles, but this must have been only very temporary, for they were already in the process of building a log house with an upper story. They were already established in it on my next visit, and in the following years when we were all still quite young spent many stayovers there with the Murray boys. Jack was the eldest and so was the big chief, George was exactly my age so that established a bond between us. Arthur and Jean were twins and Connie was the youngest and was Muriel's age. Later we all attended school together.

But in that first winter most of our time was spent at home, for we had no proper conveyance so that as the snow got deep and difficult to walk through, the distances seemed longer than ever and the cold more penetrating. The boys made a stone boat for hauling up wood and such like around the place and later made some sort of cutter for going places, but this proved to be much of a failure as they had neither the experience or the materials to make a dependable rig, and a trip was more likely to end in disaster than in reaching ones destination. So walking became the chief means of transportation which was slow, cold, tiresome and was taken on by only dad and the three boys. Mostly it was trips for the mail and in this case the trails would go from farm to farm, “or should I say homesteads” because only a few of the places had any crop on them at this time. In this way we gradually got to know the other settlers for no one would think of passing through a neighbor’s yard without calling in to see if all was well, and to inquire if they were going to any of the towns or to inform them if we were.

We went to Buchanan always for supplies, but those to the west of us went to Invermay or Sheho.

George and John once went to a dance out west somewhere at one time, and got to meet a few of the people south of Invermay. Joe Howes and Joe McGormick were the musicians but I don't think they were up to much.

Prestons and Richardsons were on the way to Meakins where we usually got our mail, and we got to know Tingleys and Lockharts because we bought feed and meat from them. Mother and we three young ones met only a few of these people until the following spring.

Mid winter with deep snow and cold and short hours of daylight slowed up all activities to a great extent, but dad and the boys managed to get out some logs for the purpose of building an addition to the house in the next summer.

And so the winter wore on with us spending the evenings and extremely cold days in reading the books we had brought with us, while Nell played the piano and we all sat. I don't think we had any newspaper that winter, and George's Punch Magazine was all that came in the mail. Later we subscribed to the Family Herald & Weekly Star, and Nell and I continued to do so up until a few years ago when it finally ceased publication.

I don't think I have mentioned our little black dog, - we called him Rover. He was not much of a dog, but he was good company and in the following years was continually in company with Muriel which was a good thing for she might easily have become lost in the bush. It was quite common to see her turn up somewhere struggling along and hanging on to Rover's hear. He didn't seem to mind.

At last it seemed that the cold snaps were over and we hoped the spring would be getting nearer with each week. It had been decided that we must have another team of oxen in order to do the breaking in the following summer. Also a couple of cows which would be the start of our herd. This had been held off until nearer to the spring as it would only mean extra feed would have to be bought and "a penny saved was a penny earned". This theory was continually kept in mind, and put into force at every opportunity, for at that period there was just no source of income.

We got a team of oxen from Tingleys, harness and all. They were a slightly bigger team than Buck & Bright. One was all red and one red and white, and we named them Bruce and Brian. They were not a well matched team, as Bruce was willing and stepped out well, but Brian was slow and stubborn and required considerable urging.

The cows were brought in from Buchanan or some place near there. One was pure white and a fair size and turned out to be a good milker. We christened her Blanche but she always got "White Boz". The other one, a little smaller as she was just a heifer, was red and white and also a good cow, and we kept them both for many years. We called her Blossom. These two were to be the start of our herd, and this was the way most settlers started, with sometimes only one.

But this is surely a slow process for a few years and one always hoped that the first calves would be heifers so that reproduction could start as soon as possible, but even at that it seems to take many years before one sees much for their time and labor. We lost out first go, for the first calves were steers and delayed the build up for another year.

There were no good strains of cattle at that time. Just range cattle, and a cow was just anything, with four legs and horns. Mostly they were of the "short horn" breed and were considered best at that time because they were dual purpose and one could get fair milkers and fair beef stock which was what one needed at that time for their own particular use. It was some years later when farmers got to establishing either dairy or beef herds.

There was at that time a government scheme whereby a homesteader could get seed grain or seed potatoes, and I assumed this could be paid for in the fall when the crop came off, altho' I was too young then to know much about such things, or how anything was ever paid for. "That was the least of my worries at that time".

We got enough oat seed for five acres and it was real good seed from England or originally from there, but there was one thing about it that we did not realize until later. It had couch grass seed among it which we didn't recognize for a couple of years, but eventually it became a curse as it thrived so well in the good soil of those days, and we had neither the power or the machinery to cope with it at that time.

Dad and the three boys each got ten pounds of registered potato seed, and each of a different variety. I can't remember what the varieties were, but they really grew in the new soil.

We got a plow from Jack Meakins. He was from Manitoba where he had farmed previously and had one more than he needed. It was a Cockshutt steel beamed combination fourteen inch stubble and breaking plow with the old style long handles. This turned out to be just what we "didn't" need, but being inexperienced as with everything else we knew no-better. It was a good enough plow of its kind, but like every other "combination" thing it serves to do more than one thing, but does neither of them as well as something built for one particular job. Also the long handles made it less manageable, and put the operator too far back from his team and thus required a much longer whip which was standard equipment with an ox team. There were some good wooden beam short handled breaking plows put out at that time and in later years we used them, but that didn't help us, I remember in our first summer in doing the first breaking.

It was quite a game with some of the settlers who were experienced farmers, to get rid of unwanted and impractical equipment of all kinds to unsuspecting green-horns like ourselves and often at prices out of all reason too. I remember our wagon which we

brought from Manitoba was a narrow tired job and cut in too easily on the soft trails and sunk badly where we were obliged to cross sloughs and low spots. Once anyone was stuck with these impractical things it was difficult to make a change for the better without considerable loss of money, and that was something nobody had unless it was the man you had bought the monstrosity from.

It was arranged that George would stay home in the following summer and do all the breaking on all the homesteads "Uncle's included", which was required to fullfill the duties on all the places as he was most experienced having now put in two summers on farms in Manitoba. However his previous experience was not as much help as one might think, for the conditions on well established farms with horses for power, are totally different to working on raw land with trees and stumps and oxen for power, so George spent a pretty rough summer of it and was really pleased to leave the district in the fall, and harvesting and threshing. I remember he went to Abernethy.

This arrangement left John and Arthur to go out to work for the summer and earn a little money to keep things moving. They had worked the previous summer for ten dollars a month which was the going wage for English Green hands.

Threshing might be more according to how good the run was. Arthur got a job as bagger boy on a big outfit and was paid a dollar a day. He was then just seventeen, Much of the grain at that time was handled in cotton sacks. They would now both be able to get twenty-five a month for the summer. It seemed at that time that the districts to the south had an earlier spring than in our district on account of there being less bush, so although we still had lots of snow it was thought that the two boys should now think about going, so as to be able to locate work by the time seeding started. This at once presented a problem. They would have to go to Sheho, take the train there to Shoal Lake and go across country to Hamiota. They could have walked to Sheho without much trouble, but they were obliged to take a certain amount of clothes and personal belongings which would be of considerable weight. George could take them with the oxen but it would mean borrowing a sleigh and then a two day trip for him under the poor road conditions and the distance. John thought they might walk it and carry their belongings easier and loaded a suitcase with his clothes, strapped it on his back and proceeded to walk forth and back across the room all one evening to see how tired he might get within a certain time and of course under-foot conditions would make the going much worse. He discarded that idea in about half an hour of testing, and the next day started to make a sleigh just big enough to hold their packs with the idea that they might pull it all the way to Sheho and just ditch it there. This idea was also given up after the first runner was constructed as Arthur had been for the mail and learned that one of the settlers would be making a trip to Sheho in the near future and would take them both along. I cannot remember just who it was who was making the trip but it may have been Ike Preston. I don't remember how they got from Shoal Lake to Hamiota, but as it was a direct road I expect they had no trouble in getting a lift, for in those days if anyone was going the same way it was the recognized thing to offer them a ride.

In due time we heard from them by mail and Arthur was working for Bill Angus again and John worked for Fred Johnson, someone we didn't know, as he was a new comer to that district and rented the farm across from the Anguses where the Lairds had lived when we were there. It seemed to leave quite a gap in the home when they left, for we were so packed in before, but that was the way it was going to be for the next six months.

Since that time it has seemed to me that at this period both Dad and George must have pretty well come to the end of their resources as far as money was concerned, and that from now on there would be a lot of scrimping and scraping to get along. I didn't know this of course at that time, because money matters were the least of my worries, and Mum and Dad or the older boys either, would not think of discussing money or business matters in front of us young ones. Such things were just not done in our family. I was made aware though that we must practice strict economy, but whether I realized it was from lack of funds or just that, we would not be going to Buchanan for some time, I don't remember.

I have many times since wondered what Mum and Dad's thoughts were at this point. It must have seemed a considerable come down for them after living in pleasant surroundings with all the facilities available at that time, and a reasonably decent income to find themselves in such a hopeless position with as far as they could see, very little hope of getting out of it. It was no wonder that Dad thought so little of this country after his previous occupation which took him into all kinds of places in England and Europe. I was never able to get a satisfactory answer from dad or any of the elder members of the family as to why the move was made to Canada, but I suppose there must have been one, for there is a logical reason for everything. Mother never seemed to regret the move or if she did would never admit it. George who was the first one to come to this country has quite recently and several times made the statement that he did do two things right in his life, and that was first to come to Canada and secondly to marry Jessie Ratery. So perhaps the whole thing can best be put down to one of the mysteries of life where many people do comical, queer, or incomprehensible things of which no one else can understand why.

It was now becoming much warmer and the snow was almost gone in places so that we really felt we had survived the winter, and were becoming free of that "locked in" and almost desperate and alarming feeling which comes with deep snow and the extra cold spells, when it seemed that we were at the point where it was impossible to maintain enough heat in spite of the continual firing and staying up late and get up early to do so. The loud cracking of the boards in the house and the similar cracking of trees in the bush get almost to the frightening stage after a certain length of time, and the relief is so great when the change comes for milder weather.

As mentioned before I have reason to believe our first winter was a mild one, for I am sure we could never have kept from freezing to death, with our single cook stove in

some of the following winters. The snow fall must have been less too, as we had made trips to Buchanan up until the late part of the winter when it became impossible for a time as there was not even a single sleigh mark on the Pelly trail for at least five miles, where one might then strike a trail where someone from the Buchanan area had been up to haul out firewood. But this was all over now and we felt we could soon be getting about a little, and with the sudden coming of spring as it is on the prairies the oxen and cows were able to get out and graze to some extent, which helped out our dwindling supply of feed, and in no time it seemed the sloughs were full of water and the shallow ones were already shooting up blades of grass, and the cattle were dipping their noses under water to get them.

Ducks and crows arrived and many other little birds which were all strange to us.

We were now beginning to think of the summer work and where our garden would be, and the clearing where we should sow our oats for seed in the following year with visions of having much more land broken up than we eventually did during the following summer, for it was a much greater task then we could possibly have thought.

Our enthusiasm was promptly dashed to the ground by a fall of snow about a foot deep and somewhat colder temperature, so that many of the little birds were found huddled and numbed in the various nooks and corners where they had tried to take cover. Many of these did not survive. It was equally as drastic for us as we had not as much as a forkful of hay left for the stock.

George, I remember hooked a team to the wagon and plowed off through the snow which was still falling on his way to Tingleys for some feed. He was gone all day and I remember him returning at dusk in the evening and it was still snowing. He had found that Tingleys were in much the same boat as us, for they had barely enough feed for their own stock and they had directed him further on to Billy Davis. However, he also was not too well supplied with feed, but under the circumstances they allowed him a wagon box full of hay and some oat sheaves. I don't imagine that could have gone very far with our six head of stock but evidently it saved the day for like all late spring snows it was light and fluffy and disappeared much quicker than we thought possible.

With this catastrophe behind us we turned our thoughts to spring again and wondered how long we might have to wait till one of the cows calved and we should once again be able to have milk in our tea and some butter on our bread, for we had been without since early winter. So at last this was the end of our first winter in Canada and therefore the end of this story. It had been quite an experience to us all, and perhaps to me an interesting one, as I was too young to worry about any trouble or danger that might have occurred in such isolated circumstances.

The future was still unknown to us but we were soon to experience the hords of mosquitos, the sloughs filled with water, going through mud holes with team and

wagon, and being soaked to the knees in water while hunting oxen and cows through the high growth. But that is another for another story so we must stop here now.

The most interesting part in the history of the early days in the Rama district would be from this point on up until-the First World War, when the district became more settled up, and there was much activity in many ways. It was a long hard "row to hoe" in the next few years from our first winter, but among all the hardships there were many enjoyable spots.