

ABBOTT, Herbert and Laura

Herbert Abbott was the son of William and Isabelle Abbott, and was born in Belfast, North Ireland in 1903. He arrived in Elgin, Manitoba with his mother and sister in June 1912, where his father and brother had established themselves.

Herb well remembered the launching of the Lusitania in Belfast, and the fatal prediction of her end, as she was launched on a Sunday.

He received his schooling in Elgin, Manitoba, and attended Business College for two years in Winnipeg.

However, the call of the land was stronger.

In 1922 the family moved to the Goose Creek District, south of Fife Lake, transporting all goods and chattels to Verwood by rail, and then overland by team and wagon, to their home in Goose Creek. In 1924, Herb went to Moose Jaw to file on his homestead in the Lacordaire District, and sat all night on the steps of the Land Titles Office.

Herb was plagued with frost, hail, drought and grass hoppers in his early years of farming. In 1927 his crop was badly frozen. In 1928 it was hailed, followed by drought and hoppers in the next several years.

In 1930, he married Laura Brodie of Wawota, Sask., and they had two children, Marian and James.

In 1946 the Abbotts moved to Nesbitt, Manitoba, where he farmed successfully until 1967. With failing health, he moved to Brandon at this time and operated a trailer park. He died on June 14, 1972. Mrs. Abbott continues to reside in Brandon. His daughter, Marian is married and has three children. His son, Jim, still resides on the family farm, and has four children.

Herb had many interests, but writing was his main interest. He was well-known for his writings in all farm papers, and in the "Brandon Sun". He was known for his ability to entertain, and was often called on as a soloist, appearing on the CBC-TV.

ABBOTT, William and Esther

I was born in Belfast, North Ireland in 1896. I received my education there, and apprenticed in Sir Thomas Dixon's lumber business. Mainly, I was measuring the lumber that was brought in from Russia in big boats. As a young man, I spent a great deal of time at the yards watching the big boats being built and launching at Haarland and Wolffs.

In March, 1912, I came to Canada with my father's brothers to Elgin, Manitoba. We farmed there until 1923, when we moved to Saskatchewan. We came by train to Verwood; and had to haul all our stuff by horses and wagon to the homestead. My job was driving cattle on horseback, without a saddle, a distance of forty miles.

I also spent some time working at Duval, Saskatchewan.

The most difficult and trying time I remember was when my mother was ill with pneumonia, and someone had to rush to Verwood with horse and buggy for a doctor.

We built the house in 1927, and hauled all the lumber from the England Lumber yard in Rockglen. I had a wagon with no brake. What a trip that was, with all those hills! After the first load I had a brake put on!

My father died in 1938, the first year there was any crop for years. He had a good crop of rye growing, but did not live to see it harvested. That year the hoppers moved in one Saturday in August, and cut the heads off a field of my mother's wheat. Mrs. Anton Kaczmariski also lost a field of wheat near Goose Creek school on the same weekend.

My mother died in 1940. I was left alone on the farm until 1948 when I married Esther Hebert. Life was a lot better then as she was a great cook! She had a grown family, and one daughter, Delores, at home. Esther learned to drive the tractor and helped with the weeding and harvesting. Life was more pleasant in every way.

We stayed on the farm until 1956, and due to ill-health we sold out and came to Port Alberni, British Columbia. We bought a nice place and have been here for twenty years. We have our own apple and cherry trees, and salmon whenever we want it!

I enjoy touring visitors through the mills and often walk down and watch the ships being loaded with lumber for some distant port.

ABBOTT, William and Isabella

William Abbott Sr., Mrs. Abbott, and sons William Jr. and Herbert came to the Goose Creek District in the spring of 1922. Mr. Abbott took over the homestead of his son, James, who had died in Feb., 1922. A daughter, Irene, remained in Elgin, Manitoba to complete her high school education.

The Abbotts were from Belfast, N. Ireland, and had come to Elgin, Manitoba in 1912 on the S.S. Manitoba, a boat that carried many settlers to Canada. That boat had limited accommodations and there was a lot of seasickness. They landed at Saint John, New Brunswick and came on a Colonist car to Elgin, where they commenced farming.

The Abbotts, while living in Belfast, often toured the Harland and Wolff Shipyards, and saw the Titanic and Lusitania being built. They attended the launching of both boats and toured them.

In 1922, they came by train to Verwood, and drove their cattle from there to the homestead, where Mr. Abbott farmed until his death in 1938 at the age of eighty years. Mrs. Abbott died in Nov. 1940.

Mr. Abbott was known for his Irish humour. He was a very cheerful man and always sang as he worked.

AGER, George and Evelyn – by Lois Lawrick

Mr. George Ager, my Dad, was born in Ord, Nebraska in 1891, and at the age of eight years he moved with his family to Colorado. In 1910 he came to Canada to find farm work in the Weyburn area. In 1913 he homesteaded in the Hay Meadow School District, where he continued to farm until 1966.

In 1922 he married Evelyn Bruning in Assiniboia and in that same year, just prior to their marriage, a terrible disaster struck when a fire broke out while the threshing machine was on their farm. The fire was prevented from coming to the buildings, and several full gas barrels that were close by. The horses had to be brought in to plough a fireguard. The fire got away so about 100 acres of wheat stooks, a granary full of grain, and about 20 acres of feed that was cut for sheaves were burned. Fortunately, it burned around a flax field that had been cut for feed. The fire spread on south-easterly across to the creek west of Lisieux, in spite of help from the people in the surrounding districts. This burned wheat had to be cleaned before it could be sold. This was a severe setback for them when they were just starting to farm.

Our post office was Hay Meadow until 1926 when the railway came in, then it was in Scout Lake, from which we were only two and a half miles. Prior to 1926 the grain had to be hauled to Assiniboia with horses and wagons.

Our family consisted of seven children – Frank born in 1923; Irene in 1924; Maryan in 1926; Clair in 1928; Robert in 1929; Lois in 1932 and Devona in 1950.

All the children took their schooling at Scout Lake, except Devona, who went to Rockglen School as Mom and Dad had retired to Rockglen in 1953. Once they got settled here, they stayed and are “well-rooted down” at this time.

Dad was an avid ball player and would drive many miles to attend a game or play ball. In 1929 they got their first new Model “A” car and then drought set in and the price of wheat went down so rapidly that by 1932 they had to turn the car back in with less than two thousand miles on it.

They felt they were a bit more fortunate than some, as they did grow a crop some years. It was only in 1937 they did not use a binder at all. The stock ran at large the whole summer and the well went dry, as did many others, so we herded cattle and horses to springs one and a half miles away. We will never forget the dust storms which lasted until 1938. Seed was bought from the government and what looked like a beautiful crop turned out to be very badly rusted and there was nothing in it, so a new variety of wheat had to be bought. From then on they grew Thatcher wheat which proved to be the best variety.

During those years, when everyone seemed downhearted and in despair, the neighbors always had house parties and our parents managed to scrape up money for Christmas. We had many good neighbors, and we were so thankful we had very little sickness. Most all illnesses were taken care of right in the home.

The crops were fair through the forties and on in to the fifties so the perseverance our parents had in 'sticking with it' actually paid off for all of us and we were always glad they did not 'leave the fort' as so many others did. The hardships never hurt us health wise and we learned a lot.

Dad lived a very full life and enjoyed his retirement. He loved to travel and visit with other people. He was well-known for playing the 'rattle-bones' at any party or dance and was able to do so until about his last year. Even when they were alone at home, he would enjoy keeping time with the radio music.

Mom tried her hand at everything from sewing, knitting, crocheting, washing on a scrub board, driving a team of four to six horses to assist in the field work, not to mention the many loaves of bread and pans of cinnamon rolls she baked. She even baked bread for a crew working at the mine to help make a few extra dollars; she was also the "barber" for her own boys as well as most of the neighbors. Enough wheat was taken to Assiniboia every fall and ground into flour to make 2400 lbs. for the year's supply. Clothes were hard to buy, relief orders were very small, so she spent many hours ripping and re-making old garments to "make-do" for the children.

Mom is presently living in Rockglen in her own home and keeps busy with her garden and enjoys community activities.

Dad passed away on July 25, 1976.

I feel we have been very fortunate to have such wonderful parents, and am happy they have enjoyed a long life to see the better days that finally arrived.

ANDERSON, Anton and Edna – by Ken Anderson

My dad, Anton Anderson, was born in Sweden in 1889. When he immigrated to the U.S.A. he met mother who was born in Minnesota, in 1888.

They followed the migrating pattern of so many Swedish people: first to Minnesota, then to North Dakota and finally to the newly opened homestead land in Saskatchewan.

Dad came up to Saskatchewan in 1913 and filed on a homestead, south of where Rockglen now is, in the Wheat Bench district. Here he built the necessary shack and barn.

Mother came up a year later with their first baby who was just two weeks old. They brought their necessary equipment, horses and cows from North Dakota. This had to be hauled from Scobey, Montana, to the homestead.

Their original home was destroyed by a cyclone but they salvaged what they could and, with the remains, built a second house which still remains on the old farmstead. When they built a third home the old one was used as a chicken house. This third home was destroyed by fire in 1950. This fire also took their entire flax crop which had been stacked in the yard ready for threshing. Neighbours all pitched in to help make a basement and move a house which Dad bought from Paul Sabourin.

Until the Railroad came to Rockglen in 1926, their closest markets were Scobey, Montana, Verwood and Assiniboia. It was a three day trip for Dad to haul a load of grain to any of these points.

Dad was very fond of horses and was the last one in the district to change from horse farming to tractor farming. He seeded his last crop with horses in 1950. He also took a keen interest in the rodeo, and for years was one of the directors of the Rockglen Rodeo which was held at Caves' Cove. His two sons Lee and I and our children became ardent rodeo fans and participants.

When the Wheat Bench School opened Dad was a trustee for years and Mother was the last secretary of the district before the school closed.

Besides Lee and I, they had five other children; Ranald (Ray); Loraine, who died as a baby; Neil and Elsie, born in 1915 and 1917, died in childhood and Elmer who died at the age of four years.

In 1958 they moved into Rockglen where they celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary in 1964.

Dad died in 1968 and mother passed away in 1977 at the age of eighty-nine years.

ANDERSON, Ernest and Gail – by Mabel (Anderson) Busa

In November of 1926 my parents, Ernest and Gail Anderson, moved to the small settlement of Valley City, now known as Rockglen, from a farm north of Constance. My uncle Henry, wife Augusta, and family of three had moved there the previous summer and their fourth child, Mildred, was born in August, 1926. Dad and Henry were both carpenters and built many of the homes in the district.

I was enrolled in grade two; school was in the lobby of the Pinkerman Hotel, now the Valley Hotel. School was then moved into the Presbyterian Church, now the Anglican Church, and our teacher was Miss A. M. Batty.

One day I was caught chewing gum and was sent to stand in the corner, facing the class, with the wad of gum on the end of my nose. While in this state of punishment, I vividly remember watching Charlie Fay, who was probably about thirteen – a big bully to a nine year old girl – calmly cutting warts off his hand with a dirty jackknife! The next years are vague, but we moved into a beautiful, new, two-roomed, brick school, with separate playrooms for boys and girls.

I remember skating on Jepsons's pond, sitting on a snow bank while donning our skates, sailing with the wind over the rippled ice and then fighting our way back to put on our cold boots.

Then someone built a shack by the Jepson dugout, south of town, it even had a stove! Great! Next, I recall, Mr. Lawrence, our postmaster, supervised and kept snow-free, an open-air rink behind Ortel Hoffos' power plant. Such joy and what fun!!! It was even lit with two lights. Spectators watched the hockey games from atop the banks of snow cleared from the rink.

A golf course in the hills north of town (again thanks to Mr. Lawrence), a tennis court, a baseball diamond and a theatre, which doubled as a dance ball where we learned to waltz, polka, flea-hop, and do a few old-time square dances, were provided for the teenagers of my youth.

We also did many horrible Hallowe'en pranks, like filling Main Street with machinery from behind Art Elliott's equipment shop, and putting Mr. Cadwell's outdoor 'John' between the gas pumps and the door of the Esso Service Station.

My parents had four children – myself, Andrew, Bob and Ron.

I married Alf Schaffer in 1941; we had four daughters; Faythe, Gaylene, Joanna and Lauralee, and now have eight grandchildren. Alf passed away in 1970, at the age of forty-nine. I have since remarried.

ANDERSON, Henry and Augusta

On Dec. 18, 1890, Henry Anderson was born at Vermillion, S.D., U.S.A.

When he was six years old, he remembers being at a circus where he sat on Buffalo Bill Cody's knee and saw the famous Annie Oakley. She looked in the looking glass, pointed a gun over her shoulder, and hit the bulls-eye of a target behind her.

At the age of 18 years, on Dec. 14, 1908, Henry filed on a homestead in the Little Woody district, north of where the Village of Fife Lake is now situated.

He rode on horseback with his bed roll and six-guns, from Weyburn to Willow Bunch, one hundred twenty-five miles, to file on his homestead. He traveled about seventy-two miles in one day and slept at the bottom of Big Butte where the horse rustler, Dutch Henry, had a cave for horses and himself. This was fourteen miles south and a little east of Ogema. Indians had also used this spot for a buffalo 'run' and many bleached buffalo bones were still there.

Buffalo bones were hauled by the Métis and Indians to Weyburn. There, Legarré organized the buying of these for thirty dollars per wagon load.

When Henry located his homestead at Little Woody, the prairie grass was up to the horse's belly. There were only three sod shacks in the area. One belonged to Forsythes where the Little Woody Post Office was located.

Henry built his homestead shack from lumber, with two windows and a door. It had a curved 'car' roof, floor made from ship-lap lumber and ship-lap walls covered with tar paper and building paper.

During the three and a half years that Henry lived there to 'prove up' his homestead he 'broke up' the prairie sod with a walking plow, pulled by two horses and two bulls. To get money to buy the bulls, he worked as a spike-pitcher on a threshing outfit at Trossachs. Later he got 'steam' papers which enabled him to operate a steam engine.

Before the railway 'came in' in 1926, Henry brought his wife and three children to Rockglen where he was working as a carpenter. He helped build the Red and White Store, Patterson's garage (now Walter Roberts') and Louis Tindall's hip-roof barn. He worked at a number of other carpenter jobs and then built his own home where Jack Shaw now lives.

Henry's hobby was photography. He was Rockglen's first photographer and many of his photos are precious links to the past.

Their family of nine children, Bradley, Mervin, Vernal, Gordon, Wayne, Dorothy, Mildred, Arlene and Wilma grew up in Rockglen.

Henry and Gussie retired to Calgary in 1951. He said he was always too busy making jokes to make much money!

Henry Anderson died on April 2, 1977 but will always be remembered for his sense of humor and his industry and struggle to meet the needs of his large family. He always thought of Rockglen as 'HOME' and was instrumental in photographically recording many scenes and events of Pioneer Days in Rockglen and area. His wife, Gussie, continues to live in their home in Calgary.

ANDERSON, John L. and Maggie – by Mrs. Virginia Prentice (Anderson)

John L. Anderson came from Sweden in 1868 and settled in Wheaton, Minnesota. In 1904 John came to Midale, Saskatchewan, with his wife, Maggie, and six children: David, Alvin, Ella, Alice, Celia, and Irvin. In 1909 young David came to the Little Woody district, took up a homestead and built a shack.

The following year the rest of the family came by wagon and democrat and settled on land bordering the north shore of Fife Lake, west of what is known as the "narrows". Next they drove their steam engine with breaking plow over the one hundred fifty miles, and in the fall they pulled the threshing machine over with six horses. It was impractical and impossible to move the outfit to all who wanted custom work done, so farmers on the south side of the lake would bring their sheaves and stack them in the Anderson pasture and they would thresh them out in the spring.

John was well known as a lay preacher and held meetings in Kanten, Little Woody, and Readlyn schools as well as in schools south of Rockglen. He conducted many funerals in the early days and the first burial in Little Woody cemetery was for a Mrs. Ferguson whose husband donated the land for this cemetery. John died in 1928 from an accident.

Alvin married Christine Flury of Midale and they had three children: Arlene, Carman and Dawn. Irvin remained with his mother on the home place until 1935 when he, his mother, Alvin and family moved to northern Saskatchewan. David married Anna Larson of Alma Center, Wisconsin. They had five children: Roland, Lorne, Virginia, Vernon and Leonard.

Before the railway was laid, David hauled grain by team and wagon or sleigh to Ogema and Verwood. He told once of being caught in a blizzard and being helplessly lost. He tied the reins to the front of the sleigh and lay down leaving the horses to carry on. When at last they stopped, David got up to find he was safe at home beside the barn.

During the years in the Kanten district the lake was an all year playground and provided much entertainment. The Andersons, both young and old, were in it, on it and beside it. They

had picnics, swam, fished, hunted, trapped, skated and played with ice boats. David and Anna lived out the hard times of the thirties acquiring five quarters of land.

Following Anna's death in 1944, David sold his farm and left the district.

ANDERSON, Oliver and Esther

Oliver Anderson was born at Mendota, Missouri, July 30, 1885. Esther Haglund was born in Redwing, Minnesota, March 13, 1888.

Mother was a school teacher and had been teaching in South Dakota before her marriage, at Redwing, in 1912. They came to Canada in 1913 and lived on a small farm near Assiniboia. The following spring they came to their homestead about eighteen miles southwest of Rockglen, to what later became the Bordervale district. A small house was built with supplies being brought in a little at a time from Assiniboia, Ogema and Scobey, Montana. A team of mules was used for hauling, field work and family driving.

Our family consisted of eight children, all born at home, all delivered by a midwife, Olive (Hall), Lloyd, Irma (Gording), Marjory (Blomquist), Dorthie (Root), Edith (Jones) – deceased, Glenn, and Millicent (Knoss).

As there were no fences, children wandered into wheat fields and cattle and horses roamed at large; milk cows had to be tethered. It was the children's duty when they got old enough to "hunt up" the horses when they were needed. Even when we graduated to horseback it was an unpleasant task – morning could get pretty cold!

One of the worst problems of the early settlers was the cold. The houses were not insulated; some were only a single ply of boards on a frame. One summer Grandmother Anderson and mother papered the entire inside of the house using several layers of newspapers and magazines. It did keep out the wind and the pattern was interesting!

Dad worked a strip coal mine just a short distance southwest of our place for a few years. It was hard and dirty work, but besides what he sold we always had plenty for our own use. This coal mining was a big help because there wasn't a stick of wood available except what was bought and brought in. The prairies provided the buffalo chips and we gathered them and burned them. There was always a danger of fires with the old style heaters and cook stoves.

Mother taught school in 1920, north of Rockglen, in the Moyer School. Dad remained on the farm and we children lived with an elderly lady in a small house at Joeville.

The original homestead was sold in 1929 and another was bought a few miles east - now the home of the John Knoss family.

Father had a stroke at sixty-eight years of age which left him paralyzed and in a wheelchair. They retired to Rockglen in the early fifties and resided there until their deaths, Dad's in 1958, Mom's in 1965.

ASKELAND, Thomas and Marie

Thomas Hanson Askeland, his wife Marie (Nee Borgerson) and seven of their nine children, Bertha, Minnie, Mary, Henry, Oscar, Adolph and Thelmer, came to the Kantenville district in May, 1911. Anna joined the family here the following year, but Carrie made North Dakota her home.

They came by train to Moose Jaw and were delayed there a few days due to blizzard conditions. Then followed a seemingly endless journey when they drove a hundred miles in a covered wagon, with all their possessions. It took five days to go from Moose Jaw to the homestead that Mr. Askeland had filed on the previous year.

The Askelands were devout Christians. Ministers were always welcomed to their home. Both Mr. and Mrs. Askeland taught Sunday school for many years. Marie Askeland was a very kind and generous person and loved to witness for her Lord.

There were setbacks but with hard work and determination they looked forward to a better livelihood in this new land of the vast prairies.

ATKINSON, Harry and Margaret

Margaret Parkinson immigrated to Hamiota, from England, in 1904, to make her home on her uncle Tommy Parkinson's farm. There she met her first husband, William Felstead. They were married in Hamiota, in 1905. William passed away three weeks before the birth of his son, Robert, in December, 1906.

The following year Margaret Felstead moved to Jackson, Michigan, where she worked as a pharmacist, her profession in England. From Jackson they moved to Ontario and then to Alberta.

In 1910, they came to Moose Jaw, where Mrs. Felstead worked for Mr. and Mrs. J. R. Green. That fall they moved south to the Furbane district and homesteaded four miles west of what eventually became Rockglen. Furbane was the only post office in the district and was run by the Fergusons. The post office later moved to the present Cliff Roberts' farm site. Their post mistress, Mrs. Lindsay, Margaret's mother, named it Quantock.

The next couple of years Margaret worked for ranchers Charlie Haenel and Mr. and Mrs. John Knox. Bob Felstead was one of the first, if not the first, white child in the district. His first friends were Indian children who couldn't speak English. Though there may have been a language barrier, there was not a play barrier. The Indian children had long braided hair and wore buckskins. The Indians tended horses and freighted supplies from Moose Jaw for the surveyors, who were camped in the Felstead yard, while they surveyed. Bob recalls meeting Annie Fertich, at threshing time, at Charlie Haenels – the first white child he had ever seen!

Harry Atkinson, an acquaintance from England, arrived in the Furbane district and homesteaded next to Margaret Felstead. Annie Davenport, a friend who had worked with Margaret in England, came to pay the Felsteads a visit – and stayed.

One beautiful fall day, Annie Davenport and Arthur (Scotty) Brown, and Margaret Felstead and Harry Atkinson drove with horses and a democrat to Assiniboia to be married. Harry sought a minister and was told they could get married immediately. Although Margaret and Annie had packed their wedding dresses, Annie claimed, "Harry was in such a hurry to get married we never got our wedding dresses on!" The couples, Annie and Scotty, Margaret and Harry, were married in a double wedding ceremony on October 29, 1912.

From 1912 to 1926 the Atkinson home was a stopping place for travelers between Moose Jaw and Montana as the Glasgow Trail passed through their farm. All classes of people sopped. They once had two rumrunners from Wolf Point, en route to Moose Jaw for supplies; a Mexican fugitive, heading north; a mounted police; an Anglican bishop and a clergyman, as supper and overnight guests. Quite the bedfellows!

Church for all denominations was held in the little Atkinson home. It was also the Quantock Post Office for many years, after Mrs. Lindsay retired.

The Atkinsons had a son and a daughter who both died in infancy. They remained on the farm until 1963 when Mrs. Atkinson passed away at the age of eighty-four. Harry then sold the farm and moved to Moose Jaw where he lived for a few years before moving to the Pioneer Lodge in Assiniboia. Harry was eighty-six years old at the time of his passing, in 1970.

Robert Felstead lived with his parents until 1933 when he started farming on his own. He batched for two years before he married Helen Jacobs of Stonehenge, Saskatchewan. They farmed until 1946, when they moved to Rockglen. Robert was the Town Constable in Rockglen until they moved to Moose Jaw in 1949.

Bob and Helen have three sons; the eldest two are married, the youngest single. They also had a daughter who passed away in her second year. Bob and Helen are the proud grandparents of three grandchildren.