

DAVIS, Henry And Bessie – by Pearl Kwasnicki (daughter)

In 1912 my parents, Henry and Bessie Davis, came to Canada from the United States. In the spring of 1912 they started from Bison, South Dakota with a covered wagon caravan. Mother became ill and had to return to her parents' home in South Dakota with my brother Bill and me. Dad filed on a homestead in the Old Elm Springs district and erected a small sod house for us to live in.

In November of 1912 we came by rail to Moose Jaw and were met by Dad and his brother, Curly. We traveled to the homestead in a wagon laden with the winter's supply of groceries. The journey took three days.

Bill had contracted scarlet fever, en route, and we were quarantined for some time. The neighbours would check on our well-being, leave fresh game at the gate, and drop off the mail (the only outside means of communication). The Royal Canadian Mounted Police, who patrolled from Wood Mountain to Willow Bunch to look after the welfare of the settlers, came to lift the quarantine. We went to stay with mother's uncle Dan Hannon while they fumigated the house by hanging sheets doused with formaldehyde.

The little colony from South Dakota, along with other homesteaders, were sandwiched in between the ranches of Sam Briggs and Charlie Franks. We had no school district for a number of years, and when Bill and I reached school age, mother went back to teaching so we would be able to attend school. Some of the schools mother taught at were Frontier, Wood Mountain, Parker's Bluff, and Hay Meadow. We were privileged to meet and know many different children.

My brothers, Russell and Robert, born in 1918 and 1921, completed the family. In 1923 the Guildford school district was formed where the boys received their education.

In 1929 I married Ralph Kwasnieki, who was born in Austria, the eldest of a family of fifteen children. He came to Canada in 1910, at the age of seventeen, accompanied by a sister a year younger. They came to the Regina district where an uncle lived, and for a couple of years he worked on farms in the district. Ralph homesteaded four miles west of Scout Lake where Arthur Kwasnicki now lives.

During the years three of Ralph's brothers (Carl, Adolf and Victor), two sisters (Micholena and Regina), and two nephews (Louis and August) came to Canada from Europe and lived with us for a time until they found their place in the "New World".

For many years, during the harvest season, Ralph ran the separator on a threshing outfit in the Stonehenge area where he made many life-friends.

Despite financial difficulties, many pleasant memories remain of the "dirty thirties". The neighbourhoods were close-knit, creating their own entertainment and social life. Rodeos, sports days, Sunday ball games, barn dances and bridge tournaments afforded inexpensive and enjoyable entertainment. One of the neighbors drove a car and, when it was necessary to go to Rockglen or Assiniboia for business or a medical appointment, everyone chipped in to buy the gas.

A number of homesteaders "chipped" together and built a mission church at Maxstone where usually a visiting priest celebrated Mass every second week. The church picnic was a hi-lite of the summer.

We were blessed with a daughter, Lenore, who brought a ray of sunshine into our home. She married John Kupper in 1958 and continues to live in Assiniboia with her family.

In 1952, we rented the farm and retired to live in Assiniboia. Ten years later Ralph passed away after a brief illness. I still reside in Assiniboia and am always happy to meet old friends from home.

My brother, Russell, passed away in Calgary in 1960. Bill is retired in Moose Jaw, and Robert lives in Penticton, British Columbia.

DAUPHINAIS, Jack And Ella – by Florence Perras
Dad was born in Minnesota and came to Manitoba.

Mother was born in Wapella, Saskatchewan in 1885.

In the year of 1911, Dad filed on a homestead in Saskatchewan, about nine miles south of Willow Bunch.

Dad's brother was helping him and, unfortunately, a wagon upset going down Willow Bunch hill, and hurt Bill. He passed away a short time later.

One of Bill's favorite pastimes was playing the violin, which he was very good at.

Dad helped or worked for the North West Mounted Police for several years and made many long, hard rides. Horseback was their means of traveling. Dad's place was a usual stopover for the North West Mounted Police.

Mother did not come to the homestead the first couple of years.

When the eldest of the children, Vic, was of school age, he was sent to stay with Dad's parents.

Mother's parents also homesteaded a short distance away. Grandfather, on Mother's side, was a country lawyer, traveling by horse and buggy. A couple of years after coming to the homestead he took sick with pneumonia and passed away.

One winter day during a terrible blizzard, grandmother's house burned down. Dad brought her to our place wrapped in blankets, which he took from home.

One summer day mother was home alone with the children. She told Margaret to go to the pasture and get the horse, Nell, while she wrote a note. With the note, Margaret left for the neighbours, three miles away - a little girl riding a horse and going over the hill real fast. The rest of the children were sent walking to grand mother's place. Our youngest sister was born that day.

About two weeks later, Margaret came to grandmother's and we children wanted to go home with her and she said, "No you can't come home, cause Mama is not there." Mother remained in hospital, very ill, for six weeks.

Finally, mother came home and it was a happy day, as we came home too. Mother then went to get the new baby. She was being looked after by a kind, neighbour lady. The new baby was our youngest sister, Winnifred.

Mother passed away in 1959.

Dad passed away in 1954.

They had six children; Vic, Margaret, Robert, Florence, Bernadine and Winnifred.

DAWSON, Everett And Veva

Everett was born into a large family near Cannington, Ontario in 1895. He left the country school very early and used to tell the story about his first job at age twelve. He was helping a farmer plant potatoes. There were quite a few potatoes to plant. After some time, the farmer commented, "You know boy, those potatoes that you planted first will be up and blooming before you've finished planting the last ones if you don't get a wiggle on."

He came to homestead in southern Saskatchewan on the edge of the local badlands, in 1914, when he was 18 years old. His neighbors to the east were the Pituley family and to the south, Ole Fagerhaug and family.

His first house was a sod shack, about one mile south east of the present house. He began farming with two oxen and two horses. Opheim, Montana, was the nearest centre for supplies.

Veva Della Henderson was born in a log cabin near Elmira, Michigan, in 1900. The Henderson family moved to Milestone, Saskatchewan in 1910, then later in 1914 George and Eliza Anne homesteaded one mile north of the site later chosen for Frontier school. Mr. Henderson helped start the school and he and Everett both served on the first school board. Everett used to come calling on Veva, riding on a stoneboat and driving oxen.

Everett and Veva were married in a little tar paper shack, which served as a manse, in Opheim, Montana, in 1918. Everett was 22 and Veva 17. Shortly after, Everett was called into the army, where he served briefly.

Social life in the early years sometimes took the form of rodeo-picnics with big freezers of ice cream, homemade and delicious. Many of these were held down by the Rock Creek in the badlands. Net fishing in Poplar River with a fish fry on shore was occasionally enjoyed. In the winter there were the Christmas concerts in Roanwood and in Frontier, usually followed by a dance. Canadian neighbours and neighbours in Montana visited back and forth. Dances were held, both in the homes and in the schools, and dancing until dawn was the usual custom to enable everyone to go home safely in daylight. Sleighs, sometimes pulled by two teams of horses, were piled with hay, hot stones, foot warmers with their little drawers, and fur robes, so the occupants were usually comfortable. Surprise parties and all night card games were the order of the day.

In the 1920's several children were born including Laura, Iva, Phyllis and Iris. Doctors and hospitals were a scarce commodity, and Laura and Iva were born at the home of the nearby nurse, Mrs. Fagerhaug, while Phyllis was born at home. Iris was born in Opheim under the capable care of Mrs. Lou Thompson. At this time Hazel Sweo helped Veva a great deal with the care of the small children. Unfortunately, these years also saw the death of three of their children, who were buried in Roanwood Cemetery.

A chilling incident happened when the girls were quite small. Laura and Iva climbed unnoticed onto the organ and found a supply of strychnine bought for poisoning gophers. Thinking it was sugar, they took it under the bed and proceeded to gorge themselves. Veva hastily called Everett in from the fields and they forced the children to drink mustard and water, which soon had the desired effect and except for Laura's burnt chin, they suffered no ill effects. After that Laura thought the height of punishment was to "feed him mustard".

Visiting was sometimes accomplished on foot, and Veva recalls pushing a baby buggy down a prairie trail with small children tagging along, when a herd of curious horses surrounded them. Fences were not common and the wild horses could be dangerous.

The first car bought was a Model T Ford with celluloid windows, set in flaps in the black oil-cloth-like material of the upper sides. It was upholstered with leather. As the family rode over the hills to and from Opheim, invariably the car was stopped as one by one, each child was let out to be sick.

Everett bought his first Rumely tractor about 1926. He and Sam Bonanko went to Regina and attended a school on the operation of the tractor for a few days. Everett and Ole Fagerhaug acquired a threshing machine and began the threshing for a season. This was ably managed by Olive, Everett's sister. Sometimes large stacks were burnt at night. This was an awesome sight to the young fry, one never forgotten.

In the 1930's there was drought, dust, heat, grasshoppers, worms and debt. Wheat brought about twenty-five cents a bushel, cattle sometimes did not pay the freight to ship them, eggs were about a nickel a dozen and butter little more per pound. Decent clothing was hard to get.

Boxes of second hand clothing were received usually from church groups. Beans, dried salt cod fish – derisively called “badger hides”, apples, canned fish in tomato sauce and prunes were shipped in and distributed. Prunes seemed to be plentiful and became known as “prairie strawberries”.

The local lignite coal mines were a real asset, providing cheap fuel. Although the ashes and clinkers seemed to amount to more weight than the coal, it served the purpose at the time. The tunnel mine east of Everett’s was operated by Pete Seleshanko for many years, and later by Glare Weed, Wacky Edwards and Jimmy Tipple.

Richard Dawson, Everett’s father, lived with the family for several years and passed away in 1936.

Gradually the exodus of the farm families thinned out the country population and cut the school enrollment to about half.

During the 1930’s Thelma, Vern, Floyd and Larry were born into the family with Neal following in 1941.

Everett acquired a flock of sheep during this time to help pay the bills and began trucking livestock to Moose Jaw.

All through these years, Veva cooked for a regular crew of ten to fourteen people with extras often dropping in for meals or a visit. It took some ingenuity but the table was always well filled.

The 1940’s brought better times. Land holdings were increased, a house moving business was begun and Everett spent a few summers combining in the States as far south as Kansas. Gradually a new truck, car and other machinery appeared.

In 1954 Everett suffered severe heart damage while on a trip to Ontario. Phyllis and Floyd took over the farm management that year, and Floyd has continued with the farm ever since. Phyllis returned to her job in Vancouver.

On July 10, 1956, Everett passed away suddenly near Rockglen and was buried beside Iva in the Creston Cemetery below a mountain side. Veva now lives in Vancouver.

DECHAINED, John And Valentine

John Dechaine was born in Leige, Belgium, on June 28, 1887. He came to Canada at the age of five, with his family. They settled in Manitoba, and later moved to the Forget district in Saskatchewan.

John homesteaded in the Lacordaire district in approximately 1909.

He married Valentine Jarton in Dec. 1913. They raised one son, Marcel, now residing on his father’s farm, and two daughters, Madeleine and Raymond of Regina.

John was a very careful farmer, and was rewarded for his efforts. He retired at Regina about 1949, and died in Missouri on Dec. 13, 1953 at the age of sixty-six.

Valentine Jarton Dechaine was born in France, Sept. 19, 1889. She came to Canada with her mother and younger brother about 1911-1912. She married John Dechaine in 1913, and died on Nov. 3rd, 1968 at the age of seventy-nine years.

DELLINGER, Urban And Margaret

Urban Dellinger was born on April 28, 1903, in Diessen, Germany. Diessen is a town in the state of Bavaria about forty miles south of Munich and near the Black Forest.

Mr. Dellinger, a homesteader of the Rockglen district immigrated to Canada In 1924. His first two years in this district were spent working in the Nerpel coal mine southwest of Rockglen.

This was followed by a year of working in the forests of northern Saskatchewan near North Battleford.

Margaret Kleinfelder was born in Rudolphsgnad, Hungary. She came to Canada with her parents, Simon and Christina Kleinfelder, in 1924. When war broke out they decided not to remain in Hungary. Mr. Kleinfelder had spent four years in World War I and they did not want their oldest son to go through the same stress. Because Mrs. Kleinfelder's sister, Mrs. Joe Kleininger, was living here they decided to come to this community.

Mr. Kleininger met them with a team and wagon at Verwood. Their first impression of the prairies was of its flatness. Margaret can remember how her mother broke down and cried because she wanted to go back home.

Margaret's father took up a homestead on the farm where Floyd Bloom now lives. Her older sister, Lena, got a job as a housekeeper and her brother Jack worked for farmers. Margaret and John went to Wheat Bench School. They had no knowledge of the English language so were started out as beginners.

In 1931 Margaret and Urban were married in Rockglen. Their first home was near the United States boundary. After a couple of moves they finally settled four miles north of Constance, on a farm purchased from Gertrude B. Nims (Stibbord). There they farmed for twenty years before retiring to Rockglen.

Memories of cooking for large threshing crews, sweeping up endless amounts of blow-dirt, selling five gallons of cream for ninety cents and ration coupons used in World War II for staples and gasoline are a part of the family heritage.

Mr. Dellinger passed away in 1974, at the age of seventy-one; Margaret resides in their home in Rockglen and takes great pride in her garden and lovely flowers.

They have three daughters, Marian (Spagrud), Helen (Kessler) and Alice (Faucher) and nine grandchildren.

DERRY, Joe, George And Robert

Joe, George and Robert Berry came before 1913. They homesteaded one and a half sections, ten miles south of what is now Rockglen. Joe Derry came up from the States, riding a bike. He returned to North Dakota, and shipped their belongings and machinery to Assiniboia. They built a house in Assiniboia for their father and mother. Then the three boys came out to the homestead. Their father died, and their mother moved out to the homestead with the boys. She died on the homestead.

When the boys wanted to go to Assiniboia, they used their bike. One would ride, then he'd lay the bike down, and the next one would ride. The first would then walk. They did this all the way to Assiniboia. They were the first to own a truck in the community. They always stopped to pick the stones off the road rather than drive over them.

George was a carpenter and built several buildings around the country. They were very particular about their farm work. They milked cows, and made their own butter. They were very good cooks and enjoyed gardening.

They moved to Creston, B.C., in the early forties. Robert is still living in a Senior Citizen's Home. Their land is now owned by Clemens Pilsner.

DIGHANS, John And Marie

In 1924 John Dighans, his wife, Marie, and six children left Germany to make their home in Canada. Their children were Christina, seventeen years; Dora and Minnie, twins of fifteen years; Clara and Paula, twins of eleven years; and John, five years old.

With them, came Bob Tiefenbach, a boy of nineteen years, whose father had asked John Dighans to let him accompany them.

This party of nine left Germany in January. They spent three weeks on the boat, as it was caught in icebergs and held up, before they reached England. After landing in Canada, they traveled by train to Verwood, Saskatchewan, where they were met by John's brother, Peter Dighans, and Andres Von Heswick. The next part of the journey was made in democrats, driven by these men and pulled by horses. The sixty mile journey, to Peter Dighans farm, was made with one overnight stop.

As Paula relates, "How different we found everything in this strange, new country! We were used to living in a nice, modern home, in a beautiful city where we attended big schools and churches. Here the vast, open spaces and strange language were hard to get used to. However, we were a big family and we had each other. Being young, we children were excited about prospects of a new life in a new country.

Even being stuck in the icebergs didn't bother us for we made our own fun on the boat – but, those ugly, boys! I recall the buckle overshoes that Uncle Pete bought for all of us at Verwood – M! M! M! He insisted we would need them and had to wear them. So, off we started in the two democrats – overshoes and all! On that trip we saw so many rabbits. We were used to having tame rabbits and I was sure could catch one if only they'd stop and let me out.

Our first hardship was living with Uncle Pete, his wife and two children, in a two-room shack made by putting two granaries together. Here we lived for a year. One of our greatest pleasures was walking to visit some of our kind neighbours. Some of those I remember are Conrad Kellers, Morgans, Scarrows, Von Heswicks, Aunt and Uncle Stepling and Mischkolzes. We lived with Uncle Pete for a year. Father was a trained carpenter so he had no trouble finding work and the three older girls also found work on farms. Some of the people they worked for were very kind and understanding. Some were "slave drivers" and expected the girls to work fifteen hours a day, inside and out, for small pay.

At times, we all felt homesick for our old home and friends. Sometimes I found Mother crying quietly to herself. One of the things we missed most was going to church every Sunday.

What a pleasure it was on Easter Sunday, when father borrowed horses and a democrat and took us nine miles to a little church about four miles south of where Rockglen is now. Although the building was just an old house, the people were all so friendly and Wittmans invited us to their place for Easter Sunday dinner.

When Father got steady carpenter work in Scobey, he found a place for us to live, on a farm near Peerless, Montana. My mother drove him, in a buggy, twenty- seven miles to Scobey, every Monday morning and brought him home every Saturday night. It was at a country school, near Peerless, that the three youngest children first attended an English school. The language was difficult but, in three months, we could speak enough English so the children wouldn't laugh at us.

In a year's time Father had saved enough money to start farming back in Canada. This farm was close to Fife Lake, three and a half miles from Fife Lake Rural School. The three youngest children walked there. Father worked as a carpenter building many buildings in the area, including Fife Lake School and the church in Constance. During the thirties when there was no crop he did carpenter work in Regina.

We were happy, now, to be able to attend church at Fife Lake Village, only five miles away.

Soon the girls were all married. In 1926, Christina married George Dyrland and Dora married John Lentz. Two years later, Minnie and Earl Hear were married. In 1930 Paula married Walter Farnham and two years later her twin sister, Clara, was married. The only son, John, married Irma Gross, a teacher at Hope Valley School, in 1942.

Later John Dighans bought and moved to a farm fifteen miles southwest of Rockglen. John died in 1952 and his wife had passed away in 1934.

Left behind, are fourteen grandchildren, and fourteen great-grandchildren, to reap the reward from the hardships of these pioneers.

DIPPONG, John And Barbara

John and Mary Dippong and their son Peter emigrated from Hungary to Winnipeg, Manitoba. The Dippongs moved westward with two other families, the Kleiningers and the Yosts, in 1910. Their belongings were shipped by train to Moose Jaw. There the Dippongs had to dispose of expensive furniture that could not be packed into wagons. Ox driven wagons took the three families on a two week journey over the prairies to the land of their choice. The Dippongs settled on a bench south of the valley ranched by Charlie Haenel. Eight year old Rosie Miller, from St. Boniface, Manitoba, became Dippong's adopted daughter in 1916. Rosie, having spent her life in a French orphanage, spoke only French when she arrived at the home of her German speaking parents. The following year the family was joined by an orphaned three year old niece, Barbara Bay. Rosie and Barbara attended the Wheat Bench School where they learned the English language. A school yell: Fracka Laya Print Cap – Oona Laya Kee Wheat Bench, Wheat Bench – Thirty Sixty Three! remains imprinted in Barbara's memory and she is still puzzled by the foreign words. Peter Dippong operated Westland Oil when Rockglen came into being. After a few years Westland shifted him to Scobey, Montana, and then to Minot. It was in Minot, in the early forties, that he was fatally injured when he struck a match to check the contents of a gas barrel. Mr. Dippong went into shock and never spoke again. The Dippongs moved into Rockglen where Mr. Dippong succumbed to sorrow after a couple of years. Mrs. Dippong died in 1946. Rosie married John Stepling and Barbara married Charles Yost: both families resided on farms in the district until retiring to Rockglen.

DISNEY, Howard And Elizabeth – as told by Elizabeth Disney

I was born in Aberdeen, Scotland on May 31st, 1896, and immigrated to Saskatchewan when I was seventeen years of age. I worked at many different homes doing housework to earn money to attend nurses' training at the Regina General Hospital. After three hard years of training, I became a registered nurse.

On January 2nd, 1926, I opened the Red Cross Outpost Hospital at Wood Mountain, Saskatchewan. I remember vividly waking up the next morning and asking Miss Isobel Stewart, the supervisor of the forty outpost units in Saskatchewan, where the town was. She spread her hands and waved, "there is the town!"

The town consisted of a telegraph office, two general stores, a livery barn and two restaurants. There was no phone, and the post office was in one of the stores.

This outpost Hospital was needed badly as the nearest town was Limerick, Saskatchewan, thirty miles away. During my term of three years, there was no communication at night, and Dr. Wenchell of Limerick was our nearest medical aid.

My first patient at the hospital was a very excited young man. He asked me to give him something to keep the baby from turning yellow – some cat-nip or something. (I didn't know what cat-nip was.) I asked him how old the baby was, and he replied the baby was one week old. I asked a few more questions, and by then I presumed the child had new-born jaundice. I told him to go home and give the baby one teaspoon of castor oil, and if the yellow did not show signs of disappearing, to come and see me again. I then asked if he was the husband, and he replied, "No, I am the hired man."

After a year of courtship, I married Howard Disney in 1928. He was born in Clinton, Ontario, on February 12, 1889, and moved to Saskatchewan in 1912, eventually taking out a homestead in the Macworth district. We lived in a granary for the first year. The following year we moved three miles away where there was a spring with good drinking water, and we built our home on this land. Our six children were all raised in this farm house; Keppel, Betty (Carswell), Peggy (Ellis), William, Walter and Douglas. Howard did carpenter work and built many homes, schools and hip-roof barns.

During the dirty thirties I acted as a midwife and made many, many trips by wagon and sleigh in all kinds of weather, to deliver babies and care for the sick. Many hardships were encountered by everyone during these depression years.

After the children grew up, I returned to my chosen career of nursing and joined the nursing staff at Rockglen, Coronach and Gull Lake, all in Saskatchewan. In 1968 we sold the farm to son Bill, and retired to Assiniboia.

Howard passed away in 1969. I still reside in Assiniboia and am enjoying my twilight years trying to remain active in many community affairs.