

GORDING, Niels And Marthea

I, Niels Gording, was born in 1884 in the village of Allerup in Denmark.

My wife, Marthea, was also born in Denmark in 1882.

In 1905 I was in the army in Denmark. The pay was very slim, a mere fifteen cents per day, one meal a day and an eight pound loaf of rye bread every six days.

Marthea and I became engaged and decided to immigrate to the U.S. but first I had to serve my time in the army before I left the country; otherwise, I would be a deserter and could never return to my homeland again.

In 1906 I was discharged from the army and for two years worked on farms. Marthea worked in a dairy. By 1908 we had sufficient funds to make our trip to the U.S. When we landed in New York we had five dollars between us. We worked and farmed in South Dakota for a while. In 1909 we were married and in 1910, our boy Norman, was born.

We decided to immigrate to Canada where homesteads were available. At the Land Titles Office in Willow Bunch we found out which land was still available and, after looking it over, Marthea's two brothers - Niels and Axil Hansen and I filed on homesteads south of where Rockglen now is. Our homestead is now owned by Victor Gording, our youngest son.

During those first homesteading years, we had many experiences while on long hauls over eighty miles of prairie trails to Ogema, our nearest railway. From there we hauled lumber for our two-room shack. Our barn was built from a double row of poplar poles with hay stuffed between them. Later we could get our winter's supply of food etc. from Bengough, sixty miles away. Often, on these trips, we were caught in raging blizzards, hailstorms and heavy rain storms which made travelling with horses and wagons impossible. We were always for tunate in finding a little sod or wood shack where we were welcomed in and fed and bedded down - usually on the floor. Nowhere else in the world could be found such hospitality as we experienced in those early years.

In 1912 our second child, Margaret, was born with the help of our neighbour, Mrs. Slorach, acting as midwife.

By the year of 1912 the country around us was pretty well settled, with a homesteader on nearly every quarter section.

Social life was slow in developing but soon we had a Bible student coming every two weeks in the summer to preach a sermon in one of the homes. Mary and Frank Slorach had Sunday school for the children. Picnics were popular where everyone enjoyed foot races, jumping, rope pulling, horse races and bucking contests. Later, the Rockglen Rodeo was an annual event where riders and broncbusters came from many miles around to compete.

Old Chief Joe, from Wood Mountain and his band, in full Indian head dress, was a big attraction. Their dances and pow-wows were a delight for all to see. The Indians were given a calf for the feast but, if that wasn't enough meat, a couple of fat dogs went into the pot. Most of the Indians were good riders and competed in the horse racing and bucking contests. Ball games were also a great attraction at the rodeo.

In winter time there were many dances in the homes. If a snow storm came up during the night, everybody stayed until morning. Sometimes a surprise party would be arranged, the ladies would bring quantities of lunch. The bachelors, of which there were many, were of course the main beneficiaries at those "doings", as they seldom brought any provisions.

William Gray was generally the fiddler at these gatherings. Tom Montcalm "spelled him off" on the fiddle at times and sometimes a couple of mouth organs "took over".

Prairie fires were a yearly occurrence, often started by careless settlers burning the prairie wool on land to be broken or by sparks from steam engines of threshing outfits. One of the

first fires in our area started on a windy day in late fall, several miles west of us. A settler had burned a straw pile in his field without first plowing a fire guard. The wind carried the fire into the dry prairie grass with nothing to stop it for miles. Mr. Olmstead, our neighbour one and a half miles south, was directly in its path but he had a good fire guard and burned a back-fire to widen it. That fire traveled as fast as a horse could run, with flames licking ahead over the grass twenty to thirty feet high. It was an awesome sight as we watched with bated breath, as it tore up to, and past, the Olmstead place. Every available man was out fighting that fire with back firing, barrels of water, sacks and blankets. Every spring and fall, on dark nights, we would see prairie fires, sometimes lighting up the skies.

For many years we hauled our grain to Scobey, Montana. There was a duty of forty cents per bushel but the U.S. price was that much higher so we still got the Canadian price. Smugglers saw a chance to make money by hauling wheat across to the U.S. without going through the customs and paying duty. This seemed to be a very satisfactory arrangement to some Canadian farmers who got the Canadian price at home without the long haul. A party from North Dakota with several trucks did a roaring business. Some American farmers kept hauling Canadian grain the year round. Finally, the U.S. Customs clamped down and some lost their farms trying to pay heavy fines.

A couple of years after we came to the homestead a peddler came along selling books. They were called "The People's Home Library". It was a mighty book about four inches thick and contained a doctor book, a veterinary book, a cook book and a host of other information on any and all subjects. Most of the settlers bought one and it was a prized possession, a never failing friend when we were in trouble and didn't know what to do.

Our children were strong and healthy; however, children seem to be able to get into trouble. Once, when Margaret was two and a half years old, the kids were playing in the yard. I was working in the field half a mile away when, suddenly, I saw Marthea coming on the run. She told me Margaret had taken poison. I hurriedly unhooked the horses and ran home as fast as I could while Marthea brought the horses. The baby was indeed sick. She and Norman had been digging in a big ash pile where I had carelessly buried some Paris Green that had become hardened. I immediately got "The Big Book" which said to give the patient milk to cause vomiting. This we did. I went for Mrs. Slorach, our friend in need. We decided against taking the baby forty miles to our nearest doctor in Willow Bunch so we prayed that our baby would be spared for us and continued to give small doses of milk. Our prayers were answered. Thanks to God and "The Big Book".

In the summer of 1913 we saw large clouds building up in the south west. It soon became clear that we were in for something out of the ordinary as clouds of all the colours of the rainbow were swiftly rolling and boiling up while clouds, following the ground, were just one dark mass. I ran to the house when suddenly the wind broke the south window and the bed beside it. I was knocked to the floor with my child under me, and the end of the house on top of me. All at once, the wind took the wall away. It was a terrific noise, of wind tearing apart the lumber and hail stones rattling. When it settled, we found the roof and walls of the house gone and only the floor remained. The roof of the barn had been loosened so we didn't dare go there for shelter. The centre of the tornado had apparently struck our place. Everything was gone except the sod barn and two granaries. One with six hundred bushels of oats in it, was skidded thirty feet while hay wagons and racks were smashed, and our new buggy was lying out in the field, twisted and broken like a piece of scrap. A full side of the new chicken house was lying north west of where the house had been. All the furniture, except one bed, had been picked up and smashed in the field. Lumber, from the demolished buildings, was scattered for half a mile, with some of the splintered boards sticking in the ground twelve inches. The crop was flat from the hail and the hay was scattered all over the place.

Our neighbour, Bill Gray, had his house completely destroyed but, worse still, the wind had taken their two month old baby. The Slorachs and Grays began searching for the lost child. Mr. Collinson, whose home was untouched, saw that the Gray place was gone and ran over to give any assistance he could. Hearing that the baby was gone, he started looking for him. As he went through some buck-brush in a slope, he saw what looked like a big doll. He nearly went on but took a second look and there was the baby all blue from the beating and cold. He

rushed back with him to the Slorach place. They quickly got him into warm water and rubbed him, using hot cloths. The baby responded and a sad tragedy was prevented – “Thanks to God and Mrs. Slorach!”

Other people, who had lost their homes drifted in and stories of their narrow escape were told. We were twenty- six homeless people at the Slorach’s place that night.

I went to Bengough for lumber for a new house and, with the neighbours all helping, we soon had another home built. This time I did not lose any time putting a wall of sod around it.

The many bachelors in the area had a way of spending the winter by getting together to play cards, games and to wrestle. As the female element was very scarce, it took a long time before some of them got married. In the mean time, when things got too dull, they would make a trip to Scobey where beer was good and whiskey was cheap’ about three dollars a gallon. They would get as much as possible “under the belt” and a couple of gallons in the car to “take the edge off” a dry period.

In 1914, our third child, Elmer, was born, and our neighbour, Mrs. Slorach, was in attendance again as midwife.

Our last child, Victor, was born seven years later, with Mrs. Homer Nelson attending as midwife.

Our daughter, Margaret, married Vic Scheltgen.

Our boys married fine girls from the district; Norman married Irma Anderson; Elmer married Louise Kaczmariski and Victor married Myra Bloom. We have had much pleasure out of our children and grandchildren.

Marthea has been a wonderful mate all these years, a good mother and a friend to anyone in need. She never spared herself when any hard work had to be done. We were young together; we put in tough and hard years together and now we are getting old together. We retired to Regina in 1944 and spend much of our time at our cabin at Long Lake, gardening, fishing and hunting. Our four children, twenty-one grandchildren and great- grandchildren visit us often.

This story is a condensed version of a story written by Niels Gording in 1967. He passed away in 1972 and his wife, Marthea, died in 1974.

GRACE, Theodore And Lucy – by Jennie Eve Schafer

My father, Theodore Grace, was born in Salem, Nebraska, July 13, 1872. My mother, Lucy Bruns, was born in Garnavillo, Iowa, December 1, 1875.

Mother was a milliner and seamstress; she owned a Millinery and Dressmaking Shop in Sioux City, Iowa. As she was cycling to work one morning her long skirts got wrapped around the bicycle chain. It was then that my father came to that fair damsel’s rescue. They were married in Garnavillo, Iowa on July 3, 1906.

In 1907 they came to Canada to homestead, north of Swift Current, near my paternal grandmother’s farm. I was born in Swift Current, on September 15, 1909; George on April 26, 1913.

Our family left the homestead in the fall of 1913 and returned to the United States. My father worked as a garage mechanic across the West. We moved from Monona, to Green and back to Monona, all in Iowa, then on to Ola, Arkansas, Cascade Locks, Oregon, back to Monona and finally up to Scobey, Montana. He did have itchy feet!

In 1928 they returned to Canada, to the Rockglen district, to farm the John Elrick place, twelve miles south of town.

When George started working at the Paul Madsen Garage in 1937, they moved to Rockglen. My father had a little repair shop behind his home for many years. In it he had a metal lathe he had made himself. It was turned by bicycle pedals which he had "rigged-up" with chains, sprockets, pulleys and belts until it was quite an ingenious machine. Customers came from as far as Killdeer and Coronach (a fair distance in those days), to this little repair shop.

My father never learned to read nor write; yet, he owned and studied a ton of *Popular Mechanics* magazines. Mother kept all the record books and spent hours reading books and newspapers to him.

They made their home in Rockglen until 1961, when they moved to the Assiniboia Pioneer Lodge. After Father's death, at age ninety-three, in 1965, Mother returned to Rockglen to make her home with us until her death, at age ninety-one, in 1966.

On April 17, 1932, I married Ernest Schafer; we celebrated our forty-fifth anniversary this spring. George married Margaret Engel in October 1941. My parents had seven grandchildren.

I can still hear my father grumbling because the town of Rockglen was going to get running water – "It'll cost so much it'll put us old folks in th' poorhouse! Why, we can get a young-un t' fetch all th' water we need for ten cents a bucket!"

GRANT, Sydney And Grace

I first met Syd in 1916, while the army was in residence in Moose Jaw. I was a clerk in Woolworth's store and we had a gramophone at my counter where, every Saturday evening, the soldiers congregated to hear the record 'If I Knock the L Out of Kelly'. Syd was one of those soldiers. We corresponded while he was 'overseas' and when he arrived back, wounded, he entered the Ross Military Hospital in Moose Jaw. When he recovered we started going out together and were married late in 1919. He then went to Saskatchewan University to study motor mechanics. In 1920 we left Moose Jaw for Joville (now Lisieux), to help his father with his farming.

In 1922 we went farther south to Bordervale School district to an abandoned homestead that had a shack and granary on it. We lived in the granary first, then moved into the shack later. Our homestead was in a valley and the only neighbor we could see was Francis Anderson. Other neighbors were Ed Larson, Bill Linthicum and his brothers, Frank and Sammy also Charlie and Edith Raymond.

The first years we were on the homestead Syd stacked several haystacks. I was supposed to tramp them down but I was so fearful of slipping off that I'm afraid I didn't do a good job. After the haystacks were finished a high wire fence and a small chicken house were completed.

My first sight of a coyote was when I looked out of the window to see why the chickens were making all that fuss. There he was, walking around and around that fence looking for a way in to get his breakfast.

Syd went to Joville frequently to help his dad so I walked to visit my good neighbors, Mrs. Bill and Frank Linthicum. I also gathered a good supply of horse 'nuggets' and cow 'chips'. They made excellent fuel for baking in the summer as they started fast and went out fast. This was very important in a small shack.

Syd built an 'open face' workshop where he worked on the neighbors' cars.

We eventually built a two-room bungalow, also a corral for the horses. When Syd was away I had to water them. I could catch two to lead to water but the third was as nervous as I was so I had to carry water to him in a bucket. He persisted in knocking it over so he went thirsty many times.

When we moved into Rockglen in 1931, Syd had quite a time getting work. He worked first in Patterson's Garage and then in Walter Roberts'. We had to sell and leave the homestead as Syd

had taken a mortgage in order to build our little home and when crops failed, they were going to foreclose. We first moved in with Mrs. Grant Sr., then into a small house. I got jobs helping with housecleaning and baby sitting. Most of the children in Rockglen called me "Auntie Grace" and there are families there that still give me that title.

I started the first library in Rockglen, having it in our home. When we left, I turned it over to Rose Elliott.

Syd left Rockglen in 1940, having enlisted in the army again. I left in Nov. 1940, to spend the winter with Syd in Kingston where he was stationed until going overseas.

Syd arrived home and was discharged in 1945. He built a home in Moose Jaw where we both lived until Syd passed away in 1967. I still reside there but visit my old friends in Rockglen where the children of my former 'little ones' still call me "Auntie Grace".

GRIFFIN, James And Gladys

Mr. and Mrs. Jim Griffin came to Saskatchewan from Ontario in 1915 with two children, Edith and Jim. Then homesteaded three miles west of what later became Rockglen. There they built a sod shack and Mr. Griffin went to work on Charlie Haenel's sheep ranch.

In 1916 they moved to a farm one and one-half miles west of the present Rockglen site. Mr. Griffin still worked for Mr. Haenel but also started farming on his own. It was here that his next nine children, Harold, Grace, Olive, Eva, John (Bud), Don, twins Adeline and Madeline, and Alice were born with the aid of midwife Mrs. Fay.

Their food supplies in early years were hauled by covered wagon from Verwood and Scobey. Grain was hauled to Verwood by wagon — each trip took three days. Later they hauled it to Assiniboia where they could also have grain ground into flour.

Through the years they worked very hard at farming; with eleven hungry mouths to fill, work was endless. In 1926 the Griffins began a dairy operation to supply milk to the town of Rockglen. Each day bottles were washed, sterilized, filled and delivered. Delivery was made by horse and wagon on summer evenings and with horse and sleigh on winter mornings. Edith helped with these chores when she was old enough. A Model T Ford was the final delivery vehicle. In 1949 they retired from the dairy business and began "straight" farming. It was about this time that they bought a Fordson tractor to ease the farming load.

In the early thirties their last two children Jean and Floyd (Joe) were born. With them came the dry years. It was through those rough years of dust and drought that Mr. Griffin and son, Jim, along with their team of horses, hoarded the train for Manitoba. There they harvested hay which they shipped back by train to feed their live stock.

In the fall of 1958, Mr. and Mrs. Griffin sold their farm and moved with their son, Harold, to Haney, B.C. There they enjoyed the last years of their lives.

Mr. Griffin passed away at Haney, in October, 1972. Mrs. Griffin returned to Saskatchewan, visited with her children and their families and spent her last few months with her daughter in Swift Current. She passed away in October 1973.