

THE I.B.GRIFFITHS STORY. Submitted by Margaret Griffiths.

My late father, I.B. Griffiths, (Bert, to many of his friends), was born in Walsall, Staffordshire, England, in 1882 , and after completing his education, the last two years of which were spent at South Wales College, he decided to come to Canada to learn farming , which he did in September 1903.

Upon arriving, he went to the farm of Mr Arthur Burgess, in the Seeburn District. As can be expected, the experiences during this first year were many and varied - one of which was helping to 'dig out' after a three-day Marchand blizzard during the whole time during which neither Mr Burgess , nor my Dad dared to leave the house to feed or water any of the livestock shut up in the barns. This storm took place at the end of March 1904 !

In the spring of 1904, my Dad's brother Percy came to Canada , where he too, 'hired out ' to learn to farm with Sandy McDonald, also of the Seeburn district . That fall (1904) they decided to buy a half section of unbroken prairie from the Rev. Mr. Beattie, a Presbyterian minister. This would be a portion of Sec. 35 - 18 - 28 in Ellice Municipality, situated close to Chillon Siding. During the following year they broke some of this land and then in 1905, sold it to the Orr brothers, Reg and Fred who had come from Eastern Canada accompanied by their Mother and two sisters Lilian and Eva.

The next land purchased was a half section from Mr Waithman. This land was situated in Silver Creek Municipality and was part of Sec. 5 - 19 - 27. Soon, however part of this land was sold to Mr A. Hall and my Dad then had the S.E. 1/4 5 - 19 - 27. Later he obtained the N.E. 1/4 which he owned until 1965 when it was purchased by Stanley Souch.

Just in passing, I will say, that about that time my Uncle Percy bought the S.W. 1/4 5 - 19 - 27 and farmed it. It was his son Jack Griffiths who was the Director of Water Control and Conservation for Manitoba being in the employment Of the Manitoba Government until his death in 1967 at the early age of fifty five.

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Now to return to the early days .-----On June 13th, 1906, Mother who was then Miss Florence Coles, born in Portsmouth, England, arrived in Winnipeg and my parents were married at Christ Church, Winnipeg, leaving immediately afterwards for Binscarth and the farm --the house being the typical 'logocabin' -- quite a change from ANY type of house in England. Here it was that I was born, Miss Holloway, a registered nurse who lived on the farm, which until recently was occupied by Mr and Mrs Chris Jervis, was Mother's nurse at that time.

Dad was always interested in public affairs. So it was that while he was really earning our living by working his farm, he at the same time, was instrumental in organizing a farmer's association. This was the Binscarth branch of the United Farmers of Manitoba (U.F.M.) He shortly became it's President and later a Provincial Director.

From that he entered the political field, and in 1922 was elected to the Provincial House; re-elected in 1927. 1932, and in 1935 appointed to the Cabinet, re-elected by acclamation, and became Minister of Health and Public Welfare, which position he held until 1940 at which time a Coalition Government was formed under Hon. John Bracken who had been Premier since 1922.

In 1940 there were Cabinet changes, so Dad tendered his resignation. He was then appointed Commissioner of the Manitoba Farm Loans Association which at that time was being liquidated. This position he held until 1950. As well as his interest in politics and public affairs generally, he was an active member of the Masonic Order, being Deputy Grand Master of No. 5 District in 1925 ; he was also a member of the Canadian Order of Forresters for over fifty years.

Now a little about the family. We belonged to the Anglican Church, Dad being a Warden for many years; Mother and I belonged to the W.A. and G.A, respectively. Mother being President twice, each time being forced to retire on account of ill health.

~~I attended Normal School, taught for a couple of years, and since that time~~

I attended Normal School, taught for a couple of years, but since that time seem to have been fully occupied at home. From 1935 until 1941, we spent our summers in Binscarth and the winters in Winnipeg, where Dad was most of the time while in the Cabinet ; in 1941 we said 'good bye ' to Binscarth as our home but somehow it always felt like home to us - and still does to me.

In 1964, my Mother was called to higher Service, and in July of 1970 my Dad too, was called Home. However my life is filled with happy memories and is blessed with many good friends, both at Winnipeg and Binscarth, and while the ones at Binscarth are growing less in number, those who remain are truly loyal and constant .

There is something about one's early memories, especially my own, which never grow less dear with the passing of time. It is of those things we often speak and wish there were some magic way in which the seemingly relentless passing of time could be made to stop, just for a moment or two, and let us relive some of those early event, which went to make such a story as this possible at all.

Margaret Griffiths .

(Daughter) .

1. The farm organization in which Dad was interested, in the early days was the Grain Growers' Association, which was formed by the local farmers, to see if the general condition of farming could be improved in any way, by the efforts of the members of such a group.

Some of the earliest members were, Messrs M. Scarth, Jas. Turnbull, Fred Orr, Freeman Rice, James Thompson, Jack McFarlane, Sid. Tibbatts, Peter McIntosh, and possibly others.

2. The Canadian Order of Forresters was never an active lodge in Binscarth--those who joined, did so, for the insurance policy. Mr. Joe Willis was the last secretary, and the number of members finally became so few, that in 1956 the Charter was given up, and the remaining members, including my Father, became affiliated with the Head Office, which is in Brantford, Ontario.

3. The Lieutenant Governor, in 1922, when Dad was first elected to the Prov. Legislature, was Sir. James Aikens.

The Premier of the province, chosen, and subsequently elected at that time was Hon. John Bracken, who headed the Progressive Party, which at that time had a majority of seats in the House, one of which was held by Dad.

4. While in public life, Dad's experiences were many, and varied, so it is difficult to recall many of them, but, as in all things, there are some which DO stand out clearly--two of these are very pleasant.

The first, was on August 4th, 1935, when a pic-nic was held in Allendale Park at which time a large number of friends gathered, for the purpose of expressing their pleasure at his appointment to the Cabinet, as Minister of Health & Public Welfare--the lasting memento of this occasion being a Testimonial, signed by the members of the Executive of the Russell Provincial Progressive Association.

The second of these memories was similar in nature, it being a Dinner, held in the Binscarth Community Hall, on July 25th, 1941, at which time Dad was presented with a beautifully leather-bound Illuminated Address, again expressing the appreciation of the community, for all the years of public service he had given. This Address is more prized by us, as it is signed by all those who were present at the gathering that evening.

With the passing years, it is such possessions as these which become the only tangible evidence of associations which to us, are very dear, as since 1941 we have never lived in Binscarth, and many of the people whose names are written, have since been called to Higher Service.

5. I really cannot think of any outstanding impressions about Mother's early years in Canada--except that she did as every other new-comer does, even today, compared everything with things in her native land, (England)--particularly prices of what she bought, each one would be changed into English Currency, as far as her early house-keeping experiences were concerned, they were greatly relieved of many frustrations, common to a stranger, in a strange land, by the help and advice she received from the neighbors, familiar with all such problems. The one who comes most readily to my mind, in this respect was Mrs. Orr, Mother of Reg. & Fred--to whom Dad sold the first piece of land he owned in Canada.

Margaret Griffiths

Note

Please return to

Norman Turnbull

if not used in

J.B. Griffiths story.

N.L.T.

The following few notes were written by my Dad in 1969, as personal observations, in addition to a questionnaire which was sent, to some of the people who had, in some way, publicly helped in the development of Manitoba, during its first hundred years--the centenary of which is to be celebrated in 1970.

"During my full and active working life of sixty-six years of residence in Manitoba, a few observations might be in order, which are not covered by your questionnaire, but which have been extremely interesting to me.

I have followed with interest, the transition period from a Colonial status of Canada, as we know it today.

In 1904 I travelled in what was commonly called the N.W. Territories. The provinces of Saskatchewan, and Alberta were carved out of it in 1905, Manitoba which was then a small province was enlarged later, equalling in size, Sask. & Alberta.

The joining of Newfoundland in 1949 completed the 'Unit' Canada, as it is today.

How long it will stay as a unit is unpredictable. It could become a great nation, or, now that the Constitutional question is a real live one, it could become something like the old Balkan States in Europe with every small, or large Ethnic group wanting its own language and culture perpetuated.

With regard to Manitoba where I have lived since I came here in 1903, much of the basic development industrially, and otherwise, I have seen, and in a small degree helped indirectly to promote, by the financial assistance given by previous governments, and particularly by the Bracken Gov't, of which I was a member for nearly nineteen years.

After I retired I gave a lot of my records, such as Statutes, Votes & Proceedings of the Legislature, and a number of old photographs, including all Legislature groups from the time the province was created, to about 1935, to Mr. Len. Johnson who was the Provincial Librarian, so am unable to give EXACT dates to all your questions, but what I have given are fairly accurate.

What may be called the highlights, (to me) are briefly enumerated, as follows;

1. Noting the running/operating costs of Manitoba Gov't.

In 1923	operating costs approx.	\$10,600,000.00
" 1958	" " "	\$80,000,000.00
" 1968	" " "	\$345,564,000.00

2. Great changes in transportation in rural parts--saw railway construction of several branches, Rosburn to Russell, from the Pas to Flin Flon for Hudson Bay Mining & Smelting Co., and now, in 1969, passenger service is diminishing, seen some tracks being torn up.

3. Public Roads, from dirt tracks on the prairie, for buggies and wagons, to graded, graveled, black top, and macadam roads, for our use, in the car, bus, truck and tractor age.

4. Telephone extension to the whole of the province--now much of it Direct Distance Dialing.

5. Rural Electrification of farms, initiated and vigorously pursued by Hon. D.L. Campbell, around 1936.

Items 4 & 5 completely altered the whole social and economic life of the rural people.

6. Went down the first gold-producing mine at Central Manitoba, & handled the first gold brick poured.

7. Present at the opening of the first paper mill, at Pine Falls, and saw the whole process, from logs, to barking, shaving into chips, pulp, and finally, the finished product off the rollers placed in cars for shipment.

8. Made the trip to Churchill, following the old Selkirk Settlers' Trail, by boat, mostly canoe, and finally the last part by rail, since ice was not completely out of the river, this was in 1929.

9. Worst depression ever experienced, 1929-39, known as the 'Dirty Thirties'. Many teachers, and others, worked for board & room in rural areas & owing to low prices for grain, many farmers actually used grain for fuel, which they were unable to buy.

Soup kitchens fed thousands in our urban centres, and many young people who could not find work, rode on the tops of railway cars, and saw Canada from one end of it to the other, 'for free'.

10. Major problem of providing good clean drinking water for large cities and urban areas became more acute, with the pollution of our rivers and lakes by the disposal of raw sewage. Winnipeg decided to construct a sewer system. I was fortunate to be invited to inspect--went down the shaft, and saw the lining of the excavation work of the main tunnel in the centre of the city. Was present at the opening of the plant, by Prime Minister Bennett in the early thirties--much more needs to be done, as the suburbs grow.

11.

Experienced the worst flood in the history of Winnipeg in 1950, when over 100,000 citizens were evacuated--this experience led to the construction of the Red River Floodway, in order to off-set further flooding in the future.

Technical assistance given by the Director of Water Control & Conservation Branch, Winnipeg---the Director, by the way, was my late nephew, John A. Griffiths, who was born at Binscarth, Man.

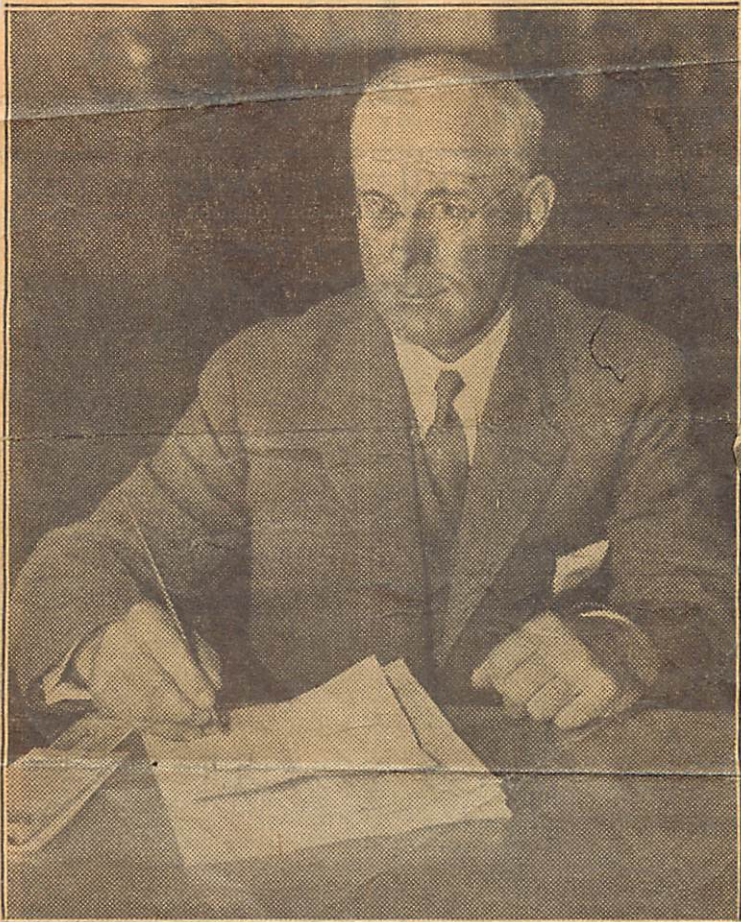
guests

12. My wife and I were presented, to, and later, ~~present~~ at a luncheon given by Lieutenant Governor and Mrs Tupper, at Government House, to have the honor of meeting their Majesties King George VI, and Queen Elizabeth on their last tour to Canada in 1939.

13. Am thankful for the privilege of having lived and enjoyed a long and happily married life, for almost 59 years, and for the patience and forbearance of my wife and daughter Margaret, which, in a small way, allowed me to pioneer in a country which I believe has all the assets and potentialities to be a good place in which to live, and call 'home'.

Short history of
the activities
of my father,
especially, during
his life-spent in
Manitoba.

M. Griffiths



Becomes Cabinet Member

Hon. I. B. Griffiths, new minister of health and public welfare in the Manitoba government, is here shown seated for the first time at his desk in the legislative buildings, Tuesday. Summoned hurriedly from his farm at Binscarth, Mr. Griffiths lost no time in taking over his new duties. Within a few minutes after taking the oath of office as a minister of the crown he was attending a session of the cabinet council. Mr. Griffiths was busy at his farm tasks when unexpectedly called to Winnipeg Monday afternoon by Premier Bracken.



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I.B. Griffiths.

& daughter

Margaret.



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July 1954

Mrs I.B Griffiths.

Margaret

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