

B I N S C A R T H

~~XXXXXX~~

1970.

Bill Search

Norman:

I have kept Bill
Search's story of
Doukabor ~~story~~ trek



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W.S. Scarth, 11450-79th Ave
Edmonton

1907 -Spring at the
Hollway Farmstead
E.W.Hollway



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02430

1917-Binscarth School



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1907 -A Group at the C.P.R. station
Binscarth

FROM LEFT-

Miss Maggie Murdock

Mr.Burkholder,C.P.R.Agent

???

Henry Waller

Walter Ireland

Jim Turnbull

Tom Fearnley

Rey.Mr.Beattie(long coat)

Wm.Waller(large hat)

Matt Scarth

Chad Lowry

Mrs.F.McPherson

Frank McPherson

Mrs.A.W.Jollye

A.W.Jollye

Mrs.Lowry

Mrs.Jim Turnbull

Nurse Nora Hollway

Dr.A.G.Lanigan

Photo by
E.W.Hollway

NOTE

1. Where photos are included the titles, etc., are on the reverse side.
2. In cases where this appears " " 1970 it would clarify the location if 1970 owners/occupants could be listed in the space indicated.
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Along the Birtle Trail

These vignettes are merely jottings on some of the tales--all of them based on actual happenings-- that were associated with the smiles and tears of a developing community. When my Father reached Birtle in 1886 the country for miles around was fairly well settled. Records kept by the "Birtle Eye Witness" indicate that the earliest homesteaders came in 1878-79, almost on the heels of the surveyors. The first "guessing game" of the prairies was about over. Everyone had attempted to anticipate the location of the trans continental railroad when early survey activities seemed to indicate it would head north-west somewhere between Birtle and the present Rosburn. This accounted for much of the early homesteading in that area. Final location hinged on the best approach to the available passes through the Rockies and when the railway route was changed from the Yellowhead to the Kicking Horse west of Calgary, there must have been some soul searching, even in those days, as to the future role of a railway in the prairie economy.

The franchise granted the C.P.R. in the then youthful Province of Manitoba precipitated the provincial fight against railway monopoly and independent builders and promoters appeared on the scene. One of these was to undertake construction of the Manitoba & Northwestern Railway, branching off the main C.P.R. at Portage la Prairie and presumably heading north-west to a promised and long-neglected land of milk and honey. Even at this early stage, governments both federal and provincial, were somewhat weary and justifiably suspicious of railway financing. The age of McKenzie and Mann with their Canadian Northern had not yet dawned-- and the well worn path they would later make to Ottawa was still far from smooth, Sir John A. and Donald A. Smith ^{having} left the surface a little stony.

So the youthful Manitoba & Northwestern had rough going, and apparently the last straw was the expense of the grade construction at Minnedosa and the Birdtail, so that in 1886, with a groan and a sigh, the builders reached Birtle and stopped for lack of funds. The whole enterprise was finally taken over by the C.P.R.

Prior to this activity Birtle had become a fairly busy center, convenient to the main freighting route to Fort Ellice, and a supply depot for the settlers to the north and west. There must have been many "Birtle Trails" in those days, the one referred to here going up to the Shell River country (the Russell-Shellmouth area of today) and branching in many places to serve other settlements. Most of these early routes skirted the sloughs and steep hills wherever possible, and if we could see them today their wanderings would seem pointless indeed as a good many of the ponds and streams have dried up and are converted to pasture, ~~field~~ and farmstead. The trails of those days did not have to adjust themselves to the nuisance of fences, which did not appear till the late 1880's. We were still able to enjoy the thrill of crossing vacant areas when I started to school at Old Balmerino in 1907, and I can recall how the trail south west of the present Chillan Siding wound past small poplar bluffs and beside a sandy ridge where the prairie chickens held their dances every spring. It was a natural paradise for gophers and badgers. In season there were wide expanses covered with ^{the} first spring crocus, later acres of yellow lady slippers and tiger lilies, and in the autumn the golden rod, choke cherries and saskatoons. Modern cultivation and bigger fields have pretty well relegated these to the fence rows and the odd spot of virgin land.

The House with the Golden Windows

Not all homesteaders stayed in their claims and suffered deprivation and hardship, despite the mosquito-ridden and ~~first~~ frost-bitten sagas that appear now and then on TV. One remittance man had a very up to date dwelling (for that era) erected close to the Birtle Trail but lacked the powers of persuasion needed to entice some fair damsel to share his lot, and in final disgust, left to seek his fortunes elsewhere. He hoped, of course, to recoup some of the money spent on the ~~house~~ house so left his property in the care of Lawyer (later Judge) C.J. Mickle in Birtle. Mr. Mickle, knowing the uncertain life of portable merchandise left uncared for along the Trail, one day hailed a settler in Birtle who lived in the direction of "Rocky's Rest" (its erstwhile owner being named Rockcliffe), and asked him if he would load up a little lumber at the local yard, and on his way home nail it up to cover the large windows of the now empty house. Our settler friend, who had earlier noted the vulnerable condition of the abandoned home, was obliging in the extreme, and in order to protect the windows properly, first removed them with loving care and laid them ~~xxxxx~~ gently in his wagon, not forgetting Mr. Mickle's request to nail the lumber over the now empty frames. It was ~~never~~ never recorded, except possibly by St. Peter, as to the exact house in which the windows later re-appeared, and shone each sunset, nor how long the lumber remained at "Rockies" as a protection.

Along the Birtle TrailHow the Doubletrees Came Home

Steve Carter and his family of husky boys homesteaded near the Birtle Trail between the present Binscarth and Foxwarren. There was nothing of special interest about their establishment except that in a remarkably short time the Carter farmstead seemed to acquire a fairly complete line of harness, logging chains, buck saws, crowbars, post mauls, barbed wire, the odd pile of sawn lumber, and tools of all and sundry type. Ill disposed neighbors had been known to suggest that such an affluence of equipment was unnatural, or supernatural, and dark suggestions had been heard that the appearance of things at "Old Steve's" place coincided to a remarkable degree with their disappearance from some other farm in the community, or in some extreme cases, from as far away as Birtle.

One of the stories about Steve became almost a legend, and may have acquired stature as it was repeated around red-hot stoves and during threshing or wood sawing bees. One known source of auxiliary revenue for the Carter enterprise was the freighting by team of supplies up the Birtle Trail and the boys spent most of their time doing this. One day Steve had gone up to the Colony Farm north of Binscarth, driving his old buckboard and expecting to be away till evening. At Birtle the Carter lads met another freighter from farther east who suggested they take his wagon and load with them, returning the empty wagon when they came down again in a couple of days. As this saved them transferring the load to their own wagon the boys jumped at the idea. However, the other freighter's doubletrees were in bad shape so the Carters bought a new set before starting home. There was a bad mudhole about a mile from their place and here they stuck fast. They decided to ride home on the horses and bring back a second team.

The next to arrive at the mudhole was "Old Steve" himself homeward bound. He did not recognize the strange wagon, but was observant enough to see the brand new doubletrees, and, after a short pause and a closer look, continued on his way. In the meantime the boys had harnessed up another team and, taking a short cut off the regular trail reached the mudhole without meeting their father on his way home. Imagine their dismay to find the new doubletrees gone, necessitating a second return home and no doubt strong and flavorful descriptions as to the character of certain travellers on the Trail. Whether the boys ever unravelled the mystery of the o the missing doubletrees turning up a few days later draped on a gate back of the barn, we will never know.

"Unto the Hills Will I Lift Up"-(Old Hymn)

There is some doubt as to whether the legend of "Rupe" Ellice and an adventure with an early threshing outfit properly belong to the sagas of the Birtle Trail, but it is included here because it seems to ~~fix~~ be a part of the folk lore of those days.

"Rupe" was one of those gifts from Heaven--a good steam engineer--who understood the foibles and failings of those early monsters that perambulated around the country during the threshing season. If the engine stopped so did everything else (except the pay for the crew) thus Rupe was ^a pearl of great price. For some years he was an essential part of the Reed Brothers outfit during the "stack threshing" era, and their run would extend from September till the snow came, and sometimes into December. Rupe's winter hibernation habits were unknown except on one momentous occasion when he made a clandestine trip to Winnipeg, and dark rumors were abroad that he had succumbed to the fleshpots of sin by playing poker in some dreadful dive on North Main Street. This brief lapse from grace was soon forgotten, however, when the value of his services at harvest were placed ~~on~~ the scales. His summer program was almost idyllic when, as a true disciple of Thoreau and Walton, he spent long periods in a sort of camp at the Assiniboine River communing with Nature, and fishing to his heart's content. As ~~youngsters~~ youngsters, we must have felt that being both a steam engineer and living like this, was about as close to Heaven as one could hope to get.

If Rupe had any failings they were not weaknesses of the flesh, but he unfortunately inherited the handicap of deafness. Those who knew him best have said that this affliction varied in intensity. If the remarks directed his way were critical or

uncomplimentary Rupe was "stone deaf", but if otherwise, he was just a little "hard of hearing". He had a good side and a bad side, and these were said to vary with the weather, for in those days no one worried too much about the scientific approach.

The episode for which Rupe is best remembered was due in a large part to his hearing problem. One long move the Reed outfit had to make necessitated the crossing of Snake Creek on a trail and, of course, over a pole and timber bridge of uncertain age and underpinning. As often happened, it was getting dark by the time the outfit reached the valley. Rupe ~~was~~ unfamiliar with this particular road, so Bill Reed, being the general boss of operations, felt it advisable to brief him on what lay ahead. Getting on his good side to facilitate his hearing, he shouted, "Now, Rupe, as soon as you're across the bridge, there's a straight piece, then a sharp bend and a darned steep hill. Whatever you do, don't stop for anything once you're on the hill--not for anything. Have you got lots of steam?" Rupe assured him, with proper emphasis, that there was enough steam to climb the so-and-so Rocky Mountains.

In the interests of safety it was customary in these situations, to extend the hitch from the engine with about fifty feet of cable ~~to prevent~~ so that both tractor and separator would not be on the bridge at the same time. This adjustment was made and, by the dim light of a stable lantern, the outfit proceeded onto the bridge. This was no time for faint heart or light hands--in the modern vernacular "All Systems Go"--so Rupe gave the engine full throttle and set his eyes on the darkness ahead. Apart from a few ominous creakings the engine crossed safely enough and as far as he could see, all was going well. What he could not see, nor hear moments later, was a dreadful wrenching, crashing sound as the back wheels of the heavy separator broke through the unsound bridge deck. The king bolt sheared off and the front wheels,

attached by sturdy cable, tongue and axle to the engine, parted from
 the ~~separator~~ ^{separator} frame which settled down on the bridge, a sorry sight
 indeed. Blissfully unaware of the disaster and unable to hear the
 shouts and imprecations of Bill Reed or anyone else, Rupe was
 following orders and pouring on the steam--heading for the hill with
 the pair of front wheels in tow. He felt the old engine handling the
 load very well, the early darkness having drawn a kindly ~~xxx~~ veil
 across the scene of carnage behind him at the bridge. When Rupe and his
 snorting monster reached the top of the hill, the moon may have risen
 and revealed to his startled backward gaze a scene of emptiness
 except for his engine ^{and} the two separator wheels, but there is no
 written record of what was said or done. But like those in the
 Charge of the Light Brigade, Rupe's place was not to reason why.

As the shades of night closed about him and
 perhaps a lonely coyote barked from a nearby hillock, it is
 conceivable that Rupe must have thought with some nostalgia of
 those balmy, care-free days with his old fishing pole plumbing the
 depths of the Assiniboine.

MANITOBA GOVERNMENT ELEVATOR

There may not be too many in the West who recall the venture of the Manitoba Government almost sixty years ago, when it decided to build and operate a system of country grain elevators. The decision was made, ~~in part~~ to meet, in part, the demand of farm organizations of that day for public ownership of country elevators. ^{selected}

Our community was ~~selected~~ as one of the points for a Government elevator. We never questioned the decision--no doubt everyone was delighted to feel that the day of loading cars by hand was over. Several years earlier our district had raised a considerable agitation to secure a "loading platform" as provided under the Manitoba Grain Act, and perhaps the authorities felt that we should next be given a little "guinea pig" treatment with one of the new Government structures.

~~By an amazing piece of good luck the elevator site was but a short distance from our road to Balmerino School--in fact where the railway crossed the C.P.R. tracks.~~

The railway, in its wisdom, decided that the location would be adjacent to the loading platform, known as Chillon Siding. As far as one can ascertain there appears to be no special reason for the name "Chillon", and one rather doubts any reference to the poetic muse that inspired Byron's immortal ~~poem~~ work. There would be occasions, of course, when the elevator agent's existence may have been a solitary, prison-like vigil, but this was generally taken for granted by a succession of very good operators. More than one of them might close up early on a winter's afternoon and travel via handcar with the C.P.R. section crew to enjoy the brighter lights of Binscarth over the weekend. If my memory serves me right, Mr. Jack Richards of Binscarth was the first elevator agent at Chillon.

By an amazing piece of good luck the elevator site was but a short distance from our road to Balmerino School--in fact where the

old trail crossed the C.P.R. tracks. This provided us with a summer of new interest, and long before the construction was completed, we were experts in many of the finer things in elevator building. In addition to our daily observations, we usually joined the groups of visitors that gathered each Sunday afternoon to observe progress. So the exuberance of youth became well blended with the wisdom of age, and we were able to discourse learnedly on almost any occasion when the topic of elevators came up.

It will be difficult to credit this today, but few of us had ever seen concrete poured in the large quantities required for the foundations. Up to that time, most of the sub-structural work on buildings was stone and mortar, and there were conflicting local opinions as to how this new-fangled stuff was going to stand up. The grain pit was also concrete, and as it later turned out, this would present a problem with moisture and leakage, as ^{we} were then going through a cycle of wet years in northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan. If little was known about concrete, less than nothing was known about making it water-proof.

As experts, we were a little disappointed in the shape and appearance of the elevator as it rose above the prairie. Our ideas of architecture would be classed as "traditional", and the new structure departed from this. Instead of the squat, box-like building with the square cupola sitting squarely on top, this newcomer extended its airy height like a New York skyscraper. The cupola was an integral part of the upper framing, and to our youthful view the entire structure had a lop-sided appearance. Another ~~departure~~ departure was that, after it was sheeted with tin--the standard practice at that time-- it was not painted red. We felt that an unpainted elevator verged on the indecent.

However, there were plenty of assurances that the inner works of this new wonder ~~were~~ of the latest and most up to date design. For one thing, it had one of the largest gas engines that any of us had ever seen-- ~~an imposing~~ of Fairbanks ancestry--indeed an imposing monster of huge gleaming fly-wheels, rods, springs and gadgets. It was cooled by the traditional large galvanized water tank and a maze of connecting pipes. Starting this giant called for all the brute strength, dexterity and vocabulary of the operator, and it was a fascinating ritual to watch. After twiddling with various levers, opening relief valves, priming with gasoline, and muttering some sort of incantation, the Agent would balance on a spoke of the flywheel, and throwing his full weight backwards, force the piston in against compression. If all was well, there was a terrific exhaust explosion, followed by a second and third, and it was off for a spell of work. If not, the wheel balancing process would have to be repeated again and again, and if for any reason, the engine had been stopped while very warm, it became ~~extremely~~ extremely temperamental.

Those were ^{before} ~~not~~ the days of the impatient trucker, and it was not uncommon to see a line-up of ten to fifteen teams and loads, with the teamsters down in the engine room giving advice and assistance to get "Old Faithful" started. These periodic delays were, of course, not unwelcome to the grain haulers. While the modern coffee break did not exist as such, this spell provided a good opportunity to exchange neighborly news, discuss politics, the C.P.R., the price of wheat, and varied fortunes of the threshing outfits. Occasionally, an unusually zealous farmer undertook to find out for himself what the hold-up was and appeared in a buggy behind a foam-flecked steed to make anxious enquiry. Such a visitation caused only a minor ripple of interest as the new arrival was absorbed into the waiting concourse of wagons.

Of course, if this interlude was too prolonged the threshers in the vicinity ground to a halt for lack of grain teams. This initiated the practice of having a portable bin available as an emergency standby.

An innovation in design in some of the Government elevators was the installation of an "automatic dump" for weighing the grain just before it went into the car. In theory and on drawing boards this device must have appeared simple and ingenious, but in actual practice it fell far short of the inventor's dream. The grain to be loaded was elevated to the top bin in the usual manner, then delivered to a special scale hopper, which, on reaching the set weight, ~~automatically~~ automatically dumped it into another spout for final delivery to the car. However, having been stopped halfway for the weighing process, the grain had little force behind it and merely dribbled from the spout in the vicinity of the car door. This necessitated shovelling every car, and the final outcome at Chillon elevator was that an Agent with a mechanical turn spent a fruitful Sunday installing his own direct spout from the gerber to the car. No one was any the wiser for a year or so, when the automatic was found buried under a deep layer of dust, unhonored and unsung.

An elevator agent's job has never been an easy one, but in those days he had to combine a variety of talents that almost classified him as Superman. A native shrewdness and knowledge of grain had to be mellowed with a pleasant personality. An almost supernatural ~~strength~~ strength of will and muscle was essential to push box cars around, start the engine and hoist the loads with the old chain and sprocket device then in use. While a crude form of the "man-lift" was installed for getting upstairs, its operation was temperamental and its occupant might have felt that he was in the first stage of a rocket blast-off. Along with all his other qualities he also needed more than average mechanical ability.

For a number of reasons the Manitoba Government's country elevator enterprise was short lived. One hundred and seventy four were built and in July, 1912 the Directors of the Grain Growers Grain Co. leased the houses and in 1924 purchased them.

The original elevator at Chillon was destroyed by fire in the early 1920's. I have a personal recollection of this--or at least of its aftermath--as my brother Bob contracted to dispose of the pile of mixed grain left following the fire. It occurred at the start of my Christmas holidays from University and I spent about half of them shovelling into bags, wagon boxes, etc. for whoever wanted to buy some feed. However, I think the effort netted me about fifty dollars which seemed a lot in those days. When the site was finally cleaned up in the spring, the only visible reminder of Chillon's first government structure was the monstrous old gas engine with its now flattened water tank and twisted pipes. Before these were hauled away for scrap I have no doubt the echo of heartfelt blessings and maledictions must have been heard returning on the prairie winds to haunt its final resting place. There would be other echoes too--of the long crossing whistles of the "Flyer", the Great West Express, on its way to and from Edmonton and Winnipeg in the dark hours, and the old Local from Russell that came down in the morning and back at night so regularly that when working in the fields we could set our watches by it.

The Doukhobor March-1902.

The marking of Canada's Centennial Year in the West naturally centered a great deal of attention on the first settlements in the prairie region and the many and diverse groups that took part in its transformation. In those pioneer years it soon became obvious that ethnic groups would at first strive to retain their own familiar customs and culture in new and strange surroundings. Spread from sea to sea over a vast area, too often they would be isolated in both feelings and physical distance from taking any active part in developing Canada as a new nation in its own right.

There are few left who will have personal recollections of the famous Doukhobor March from the ^{Yorkton} ~~Yorkton~~ area to Minnedosa in November, 1902. I had heard Father and the neighbors tell of it as they recalled pioneer days in our district, and perhaps the reason that our family remembered it was because some of the weary and famished marchers came to our farm in search of food on that bleak November evening sixty-seven years ago.

It was likely the first mass trek undertaken by the Doukhobors, following their arrival in the Yorkton-Canora area some four years earlier from Russia. From time to time a sort of religious fervor stirred the newcomers as they attempted to adjust their ways to a new land, and it appeared to reach a crisis in the fall of 1902. Finally, a large number set out on a pilgrimage to the east--in their own words "to seek the true Christ". With them were several fanatics who fanned their simple beliefs to a frenzy, and at least one of these professed to be some sort of re-incarnation of John the Baptist.

Oddly enough, the appearance of this "messenger" apparently gave rise, a year or so later, to another one who was no

~~He was a man of great~~



An early Doukhobor March--In 1902 women and children were kept in Yorkton before the march started.

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no doubt an impostor of neither Doukhobor faith nor any other. He referred to himself as "John the Baptist" and his female companion as the "Virgin Mary". They travelled the roads around Binscarth in a sadly dilapidated buckboard drawn by a most ancient equine, whose protruding ribs were certainly the most prominent feature of its makeup. Their existence depended on the generosity of those they met on their travels, and no one really knew from whence they came nor where they disappeared. It was said that "John" could quote Scripture at some length and foretold the end of the world. This was a ~~future~~ future cataclysm that failed to impress our farmers that year as a hard frost in August had succeeded in ~~the~~ just about ~~finishing~~ finishing things, anyway.

In an effort to discourage the march, the Mounted Police collected the women and children as they reached Yorkton, accomodating^m them there in a hastily improvised "camp". However, this restriction appeared to have little influence on the men, now numbering about six hundred, who set off south-eastward along the C.P.R. tracks. The weather at the start was mild, but by the time the column had reached Binscarth on November 2nd, it had turned cold and stormy.

As the marchers passed through the village, they spread out in search of food, and Father recalled that some grasped handfuls of grain from sacks being unloaded at one of the flat warehouses then in use. A number of townspeople gave them vegetables, as many seemed almost starving. They were quiet and orderly, but one can imagine the excitement caused by a group of this size going through the village. They were poorly clothed, many having thrown away heavier garments in their first enthusiasm and religious fervor unhindered by either cold or discomfort. Their main food as they walked seemed to be the dried rose hips on the bushes and what little they might be

might be given from people's extra store of vegetables.

Apparently Father and Mother had taken me with them to Binscarth in the late afternoon, leaving my older brother Bob with a Ukrainian girl at home. Just before dusk, the Doukhobor column came along the track over a hill about a mile west of our buildings. A number left the main group to make a detour across country, no doubt in search of food, and a few reached our house just before dark. The young Ukrainian girl was naturally terrified, and gave them a loaf of bread. Brother Bob---about four years old---felt that our family could do better than that, and toddled out with an entire new baking of eight loaves.

About this time it seems we returned from town, and Father often ~~xxx~~ related the **story** of what followed. It had been a good garden year, with far more vegetables taken up than we would ever use, so ^{he} ~~Father~~ turned a sack of turnips, carrots and potatoes over to the starving men. That fall he had discarded an old cook stove which was still sitting in a bush back of the house, and around this prize discovery the Doukhobors assembled to cook their food by roasting everything on top. As they warmed themselves by the old stove the famished men gulped down the half-raw vegetables and then tried to express their gratitude to us in animated gestures. They tried to kiss everyone's hands and it must have been a strange scene, with no one able to understand a word of what was said. Following ~~their~~ hasty meal, our visitors rejoined the main group, and the whole column camped for the night in a bluff beside the railway close to the present Chillon Siding. The cold night wind was apparently in our direction, and Father recalled their singing around a great campfire of brush and logs.

The march continued to as far east as Minnedosa, where

The march continued as far as Minnedosa, where the group was taken in charge by the Mounted Police and returned to Yorkton by train. I understand that it was then that a number of "disrobing" incidents took place, apparently in protest against the interference of the authorities with the free expression of their religious beliefs.

where the group was taken in charge by the Mounted Police and returned to Yorkton by train. I understand that it was then that a number of "disrobing" incidents took place, apparently in protest against the interference of the authorities with the free expression of Doukhobor religious beliefs.

A few years later we had Doukhobors come to work for us, and they were first class ~~men~~ men and conscientious workers, very careful of the horses and machinery. Mother admitted that it was sometimes a problem to feed them properly as they never ate meat in any form. They loved gardening, and I can remember them working in ours far into the long summer ~~s~~ evenings, after a full day in the field. Subsequently we often compared our garden to the one we had "when the Doukhobors were here", but were never able to equal their achievements. On Sundays they would dig "seneca root" on strips of prairie, an industry they had learned from our Indians who sold it to wholesale drug firms. One of them made a "digger" for me from a discarded colter blade from a breaking plow and an ash fence post, but I never realized how long it took to collect a pound of dried seneca root.

As the Doukhobors in northern Saskatchewan and Manitoba became adjusted to the ways of Western Canada they developed fine homes and farms. Today many of the descendants of those first arrivals from Russia are proud to be known as Canadian citizens, and as both rural and urban residents they are assuming an increasingly active role in the development of their communities.

Angus Brothers Outfit-

Of course, I have no personal recollection of the Angus threshing outfit so am indebted to Father and Mother's description of what was involved in the way of men and machines in those early days. The traction engine had not yet appeared on the western prairie and the whole outfit was hauled by oxen or horses. The early portable steam engines were in many cases "uprights"-i.e.-with vertical boilers--in some respects similar to those strange contraptions one still sees on city streets today thawing out frozen sewers. I believe the first Angus engine was of this design--succeeded later by a horizontal boiler but still portable. Angus Brothers, the pioneer family after whom the village of Angusville is named, covered a very large territory with their outfit. All grain was stacked and was often threshed in November and December with winter conditions prevailing. The Angus boys were all big, sturdy chaps and Mother often remarked about them coming in at night with their clothes frozen and creaking like sheets of ice, so that they had to thaw for awhile in front of the stove before they could get their coats off. It did not make much difference on what part of the outfit they worked--around the engine they got water splashed on them, and at the separator there was a continual drift of snow and chaff as the bundles were **thrown** off the stacks. Sheaves landed on a table in front of the separator where the men working as "band cutters" cut the band and pushed the sheaf into the cylinder. It may be hard to realize that early threshers had neither feeder, straw blower nor bagger. After being beaten and shaken out of the straw the grain was delivered by a crude auger at one side of the machine about ground level into a metal measure which carried a crude bushel "register". The man operating this dumped the filled



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Stack Threshing with
an early portable
outfit.

Glenbow Foundation
Photo

measure into sacks and tripped the register to tally the amount threshed. The sacks were hoisted onto a wagon and the load hauled to a bin or granary at the farmstead. Portable bins did not come into general use until stook threshing started. Possibly recurrent prairie fires and wandering livestock had something to do with this.

Threshed straw always posed a problem. It was delivered from the separator on a "straw carrier" and elevated as high as possible to provide room for a stack. Several men were needed to keep the carrier clear and build some form of stack, and this was one of the worst jobs on the outfit. Father claimed that Uncle Jimmy Turnbull was responsible for a great labor saving idea on the day he hitched a team of horses to a crude sweep and rolled the straw onto a pile with a lot less back-breaking work. The adoption of the self-feeder, followed by the straw blower, certainly transformed the threshing picture.

The engineer had his own problems. Practically none of the early steam engines were equipped to burn the cheapest and handiest fuel-straw- so they ^{required} large piles of wood. Water supply was another headache, because ninety percent of the local slough water was highly alkali and caused dangerous foaming in the boiler. Most well water was high in lime and there were few that could supply the amount needed, so it was usually necessary to haul it from a creek or spring which might be miles away. The tankman became a very vital cog in the whole operation.

There were hazards in working on these early outfits, but the dangers were not brought home in any serious way until the tragic accident in the Castleavery district north-west of Russell in October, 1889

in October, 1889, with the steam outfit threshing at Mr. Jack Anderson's farm. The engine boiler exploded and killed two men, Frank Dugan and James Fullerton, and seriously injured several others of the crew. Conflicting accounts of the cause for the tragedy have been given, some indicating that a wooden plug was driven into the opening meant for a safety valve, others that the water level in the boiler was dangerously low and when replenished the explosion occurred. It indicated the need for some systematic checking of steam boilers everywhere and resulted in legislation under the Manitoba Boiler ~~Act~~ Inspection Act.

Old Threshing DaysA Day for Uncle Dan

There must have been something about the big outfits that fostered the practical jokers, because this seemed to be the time and place for their active minds to bear fruit. One incident that we, at least, thought was very funny, involved a likeable old character whom I shall call "Uncle Dan" because that was the name he was always known by. When I say "old" I should qualify the term to include his late sixties. Dan did not operate a farm of his own, but for years had "batched" and then lived with his brother's family, so that is where the "Uncle" came in.

Each fall when the threshing outfit pulled into their farm Dan seemed to take a new lease on life. The rather monotonous labor of cutting and stooking was over, and a new excitement electrified his every movement. In modern harvests of swather, combine, grain loaders and trucks it is difficult to create that sense of urgent activity that pervaded every hour of those early threshing days, from the harried housewife to the last teamster in the field.

Being an excellent teamster of the old school, Dan was always assigned to the grain wagon corps and this suited him, as here he could assume a semi-official supervisory attitude with some of the younger fry who were just breaking into the game. In today's parlance he would doubtless be classified as an "executive director" although some may have had ~~some~~ reservations as to his qualifications to fill such an office. But ~~xxx~~ let it never be said that Dan's language and manners were not suitable for every occasion, but as circumstances demanded. Dan loved horses, but he expected them to move at a smart pace, even during other less exciting seasons than

than threshing, but while that hectic period lasted if he wasn't going at a smart trot, it was a headlong gallop. The younger generation handling the other grain teams soon sensed this aura of urgency in his movements and hatched a dark plot to have some fun at his expense. This was before the period of grain tight wagon boxes and all grain had to be sacked at the separator. In most cases the loaded sacks ~~were~~ manhandled into a large granary at the farmstead and finally dumped into bins. This sacking routine required each teamster to carry the necessary supply of empty bags in his wagon, and if, as was often the case, he was a neighbor trading work, his sacks were often identified by initials or even brands.

In the code of the grain haulers there were several important rules to be observed, among others that each team should keep strictly to its turn bagging at the separator, and that no grain should be spilled in the wagon, or Heaven forbid--on the ground. The rules, of course, included accepted teamster practices such as backing ones wagon ~~skilfully~~ skilfully into a narrow space between ~~two~~ two others or between the stack and ~~the~~ separator. ~~This~~ This may sound simple to today's truck wranglers, but just try it with a skittish team and the emphatic suggestions and observations of critical bystanders.

The plotters realized that the only time they had to prepare their plan was during the time Dan was eating his noon meal, and this would be little enough as their victim estimated time spent eating at midday was a necessary waste, so his was usually a hasty snack. It did provide opportunity, however, for the lads to arrange his sacks in a neat pile on the bottom of the wagon--the open ends of each pair being pushed into each ~~other~~ other, with the result that ~~all~~ sacks appeared to have only bottoms. Others in the plot engaged Dan in a story-telling marathon on duck hunting which challenged some

some of his boasted records, and those who ~~xxx~~were unusually helpful unhitching for him at noon had knotted up the reins so tightly on the harness that it took extra effort and vocabulary to undo them. The result of all this was that, to his horror, Dan realized he would arrive late at the outfit and might even miss his turn--a situation too dreadful to contemplate.

The crew were shortly treated to a spectacle that would have warmed the hearts of the early Romans watching the approaching chariot of a Caesar, as Dan proceeded down the field in a column of dust. It was roughly half a mile to the outfit, and, after covering perhaps a third of the distance, he heard several short whistles from the engineer, also in the plot, indicating the need for a grain team. Nothing like this had happened in years, and whirling his team in a great circle as he approached the separator~~or~~, Dan stopped and backed in to the bagger spout, all in the twinkling of an eye. The crop was heavy oats and the half bushel tally was dumping about as quick as one could count so there was no time to be lost. Seizing a bag from the pile Dan whirled it around to place it under the spout, but found only bottoms of bags. Tossing it away he reached for another and another. His frantic search continued as each sack he picked up seemed to have no top, and in disgust he scattered them right and left. The spectacle of Dan amidst a cyclone of ~~sacks~~ sacks encouraged everyone to shout and exhort him to hurry as grain was flying all over. Prior to this Dan may have sensed a conspiracy but now he knew and his ~~language~~ language and gestures were fitting to the occasion, much to the glee of the bystanders.

However, about ten days later Dan evened the score with his jokers when he challenged them to a wagon race across the field and beat them all by three lengths. When it came to handling horses, you were always safer to bet on Uncle Dan.

Old Threshing DaysThe Big Woodiwiss Outfit

~~The biggest~~ threshing outfit to operate in the Binscarth district was the one purchased by Mr. Reg. Woodiwiss about the year 1911. Reg. had come from England with a considerable sum of ready cash and purchased the half-section of land just east of Binscarth (1970). He hired large gangs to clear and break a lot of it, put up a large farmstead of buildings, and imported some very fine purebred livestock from Britain. To satisfy his mechanical bent he purchased a Case car, the largest that any of us had ever seen. It looked as large as a locomotive and likely weighed almost as much. Reg. always did things in an impressive way so no one was too surprised when he purchased the biggest steam tractor available from the J.I. Case Co. with separator to match. I regret not being able to give specific sizes but know that a full crew consisted of fourteen bundle teams. This would mean at least twenty four men, exclusive of those hauling grain.

As the ambitious plans matured, a real innovation was introduced consisting of a "cook car" for the crew to eat in, complementing the customary "caboose" for sleeping quarters. This idea certainly received grateful appreciation from the farmers' wives who up till now had spent long and anxious hours over balky stoves preparing vast meals and lunches. I recall that John Pearson was the cook and there is every reason to believe he was a good one. In later years John was a horseman of some repute, but he often reminisced about his culinary experiences with the Woodiwiss outfit. I have a recollection of a piece of John's apple pie one Saturday afternoon when they were threshing at our place, and it certainly made the day for me.

Of course, straw was inadequate as a fuel for the big engine so coal was used, and it may be hard to credit the fact that this was the first time many of us had seen it burned in a threshing engine. There were always a few lumps left at each setting and we tried some in our heater at home and were dismayed later to find part of the grate burned out.

These were the "wet years" in the Binscarth district and prolonged summer rains left great ponds of water in the fields and in the fall enormous flocks of ducks were everywhere. The crops grew rank and finally lodged in frightful tangles, hundreds of acres had to be cut "one way", and a considerable area could not be cut until the ground froze to hold up the binders. A number installed small Cushman gas engines on the binder to drive the mechanism, as the horses had a full load just to pull the binder over the soft ground. We always associated these years with the Woodiwiss outfit because they hauled water for the engine out of our basement. This was actually a cellar that had filled up during the summer despite all our efforts to keep it pumped out. Even the thirsty engine did not empty it so we spent at least one winter with an ice palace beneath the house.

It would be that fall that an incident concerning the big outfit was a topic of conversation in our home for a long time afterward. Our west half was intersected by a ravine which ran in such a way as to divide the land into three fields. In order to move to a new setting the outfit had to cross the tiny creek at the west end where the banks were quite low. During an interlude caused by rain, Father decided to build a crude pole platform covered with several loads of manure to make a good crossing. The location he chose required the outfit to move about a quarter of a mile further, and, before the day was over, it proved the old adage that "the longest

way around can be the shortest way home". Always impatient to move, the crew came out in the early afternoon and, ignoring Father's bridge, apparently decided to take a short cut across the little ravine which to them looked like a very trifling obstacle. There was some water in ~~it~~ it, but the bottom was hard, so they unhooked the separator, fortunately, and started over with the big engine.

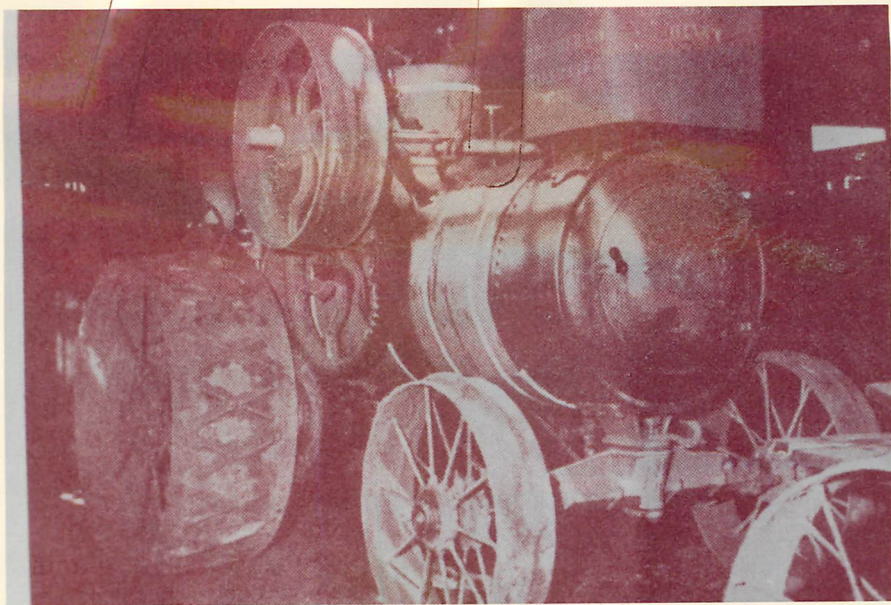
The bundle racks were loading up in the new field, and about an hour later some of the men went down to see what delayed the outfit being set. There was the engine in the little rivulet, the huge bull wheels spinning fruitlessly in the mud, unable to move. The front end of the boiler was quite high which presented an element of danger as exposure of the crown sheet to intense heat may cause warping or leaking of the flues. It was obviously impossible to raise the enormous weight with jacks, so old ties were brought from the railway about half a mile distant. As youngsters we watched with fascination as the ties were chained to the front of each bull wheel and then slowly dragged under to gradually raise the engine. By the time they finally got the monster out, pulled the separator over with a cable, and got set, darkness had fallen. Having assisted in building Father's pole structure, our Scottish hired man summed up the day's activities by remarking, "Aweel, as me old feyther used to say, a stupid head makes a tired leg".

For years later, whenever we cut hay on the lower ravine flats we had to skirt around the two cellar-like holes that the engine wheels had left, and it would not surprise me at all if I could still find them there.

Fortunately Reg. Woodiwiss did not come out that day, but he visited the outfit quite often. He never interfered in the operation, but it must have had a great fascination for him. Our fascination consisted

of watching him navigate the big grey Case car with its shiny brass levers and headlamps. He invariably got stuck in a mudhole on the road just below our buildings, and after carting about half a load of sheaves from the nearby field to try and get out, he would finally give up. Eventually someone would go by with a team and haul him out and he would arrive in our yard, much to our delight.

The Woodiwiss enterprise would be about the last of the really big ~~units~~ steam outfits in the Binscarth district. The Rumely, Hart Parr and Twin City appeared with their large gas tractors, needing only an engineer to look after them and, following the First War, the smaller field units took over on the prairies. These could do tillage jobs and also operate a small separator so that many ^{farmers} ~~farmers~~ acquired their own threshing equipment.



Return Flue Steam Tractor
Smokestack at other end
of boiler.

Saskatoon Pioneer Museum
Photo.

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Old Threshing DaysThe Old "Coffee Pot"

This was the title we gave to possibly one of the most famous steam tractors in the Binscarth community, and very likely the one with the longest active life in our corner of Manitoba. To dignify it by its proper name it was a "Minneapolis Return Flue Steam Traction Engine", and one feels sure that if our modern salesmen were asked to christen it they would come up with something ~~like~~ suitable like-"Fire Eater" or "Bull of the Woods". Unfortunately I have no way of verifying the date, but it made its appearance in our district early in the century because I was very young when I first saw its monstrous bulk in one of our fields. Its advent to the community followed the organization of a group of farmers into the "D. Hall Threshing Syndicate", and Father became involved with it in this way. This particular engine was highly recommended by so called experts, as the return flue design was considered at that time to be the only successful straw -burner. This necessitated that the smoke-stack be at the back of the boiler, and it was no doubt due to this rather ^{grotesque} design that it earned the "coffee pot" title. As the patina of age added color to its rather grimy exterior there were other features that might have resembled some well used kitchen utensil. Strangers could never quite adjust to the idea that it was not actually moving backwards; it just looked that way.

Following the usual pattern of those times of limited experience with power machines, the engine went through the customary ups and downs with good engineers and bad ones. Father always claimed that, during the Syndicate years, Emile Dupont was the only one who really got the best out of it. Emile had that gift of understanding steamers, and as the Minneapolis went ~~through~~ through such childhood

ailments as leaking flues, balky injectors and overheated bearings, he nursed it and cursed it but always got it back to work.

After a few years the threshing syndicate dissolved, and the outfit was sold to Mr. James Fletcher. The old engine was to give many years of service under ~~the expert skillful operation~~ skilful operation by his son Jack, and it would be interesting to guess how many bushels it threshed. The fireman on one of these early outfits was as important as the engineer and put in fantastically long hours. He was out to attend the engine about 4 a.m. to get steam up, and quite often was the last man in at night. For years Jack's official fireman was Bob (better known as "Irish") Wilson and as youngsters he endeared himself to us forever by letting us push a few ~~forkfuls~~ forkfuls of straw into the fire-box of the ~~powerful~~ powerful monster. As the years went by the old "Coffee Pot" developed its wheezes and groans, but who does not? Steam escaped from it in unauthorized places to cause alarm to some, but Father was of the opinion that as long as it leaked it was less likely to blow up--a comforting thought for all of us.

By this time the engine had developed a typical asthmatic sound that belonged to it alone--a sort of cross between a low whistle and a squeal which could be heard almost half a mile away. It also had the most disconcerting habit of "blowing off" from the safety valve with a sudden blast that often startled inexperienced teams into headlong flight. The bundle racks became used to this, but new grain teams were at a disadvantage. There was no warning as to just when the air would be rent by this shattering sound and it must have been very loud to drown out all the other noises around the outfit.

At last the old Minneapolis made its final bow to the world and backed forlornly into the shelter of some bluff, its fires died down, and perhaps the next spring a robin nested in the shelter of that old smokestack. Sometime in the period of the First War it faded from the scene, quietly and without fanfare, veteran that it was. It likely disappeared into some huge scrap disposal pile. ~~Those of us~~ Those of us who recall ~~the~~ the long years of service in the harvest fields around Binscarth remember its strange form with affection and hear its husky whistle still echoing across the years.

Nothing as colorful as the big steam outfits will ever replace them on the prairie scene again--there was a personal quality about ~~all~~ all of them that endeared them to our hearts. Perhaps our parents were limited in their enthusiasm at their appearance each fall, but to the farm youngsters they brought a new interest and excitement all their own.

The Waller Family

No history of Binscarth would be complete without something about the Waller family. They came west from Ontario in the early 1890's, and included Mr. and Mrs. Henry Waller, their daughter Flossie, and Henry's brother William Waller, usually referred to as "Uncle Bill". They took up location on Section 12, ~~12-1~~ east of Binscarth (1970).

A short cut to town from our place passed through the Waller farmstead, and as ~~youngsters~~ youngsters they left an indelible impression on our minds that has always associated itself with the earlier days of the community.

Waller's had a great and abiding faith in Canada and the future of the prairies, predicated of course on their conviction that westerners would soon have sense enough to vote in a good Conservative Government at Ottawa to replace the Laurier administration of the day.

They had brought a number of things with them from the east, some of them strange and fascinating in our eyes. There was a huge black cauldron resting on a sort of firebox which was actually used to heat water to scald hogs, and had also been used for making soap. And over near the kitchen, but apparently not in use, was a strange contraption with big rollers and a long crank handle. This turned out to be a clothes mangle. Just at the edge of the bush stood the most interesting piece, however, ~~which I later learned was a~~ a small stationary steam engine. Once Mrs. Waller told us that Uncle Bill was so attached to it he insisted on wedging it into their car of settler's effects, assuring the Ontario neighbors helping him that he would soon have a sawmill going out in Manitoba.

There always seemed to be a fascination about the Waller kitchen

kitchen. Their stove appeared much larger than ours but that may have just been our imagination. At the back, in a state of perpetual simmer, sat a very large black pot emitting a rather appetizing aroma. As soup was a very basic article of diet in those days we assumed that is what the contents were. As it turned out, it was a mixture of barley, oats, potato peelings and other unsavory morsels in a brew and its purpose we finally discovered when Mrs. Waller dispatched Henry with the festive dainties to the pigpen. But we were most impressed with two old rifles that hung on nails above the stove. Our young minds were just beginning to grasp some of the more exciting phases of a day long past, when firearms cracked and miscreants bit the dust. The odd discussion by our elders of the earlier Fenian incursions in eastern Canada and the 1885 troubles in Saskatchewan seemed to focus attention on the Waller artillery. Their home in Ontario had been near Tilsonburg and Henry on occasion would recall the hostile border activities of the Fenians, so we naturally assumed that he had been in the thick of the fray. There was something of the frontiersman in Henry Waller's speech and manner and our youthful visions were quite capable of seeing him peering from behind a tree, his sharp eye drawing a bead on some unsuspecting Fenian lurking in the primeval forest of darkest Ontario.

But it was the huge garden, the berry bushes, the ~~flowers~~ flowers and the lilacs that were Mrs. Waller's pride and joy. How she ever managed to keep it all so spic and span no one ever knew. In addition to her garden and poultry, it was quite within her competence to give some very definite direction to Henry, Bill and the hired help regarding necessary activity in the fields and around the barns, because she had an eye and ^{an} interest in everything about the farm.

The Wallers possessed that innate sense of hospitality that added so much color and interest to the pioneer scene. Mrs. Waller loved to have visitors in the gardens, and one of the highlights of the summer season as long as she was able to plan it was the Garden Party for the ladies organization of the Anglican Church. She would try to hold it when the lilacs ~~x~~ were at their best and it was an event known far and wide. Everyone went home with a large bunch of blossoms and explicit instructions as to how their life could be prolonged. As the shades of evening gathered the Waller family must have been quite worn out, but after Bill and Henry had assisted ~~everyone~~ everyone to get their steeds hitched to the right vehicles, nothing in their courteous farewells left anything but happiness with their guests and warm assurances that they would be back next summer.

The Wallers kept bees, which were a constant source of interest to us. As far as I know there were no other domesticated bees in the community at that time, and naturally our first ideas of their activities centered around their stinging abilities. I can recall observing a fascinating soup plate piled with comb honey and it was easy to convince us that this was indeed a feast for the gods of Olympus. One day we were taken out to look at the bees and were a little disappointed to find them living in ordinary square boxes instead of those picturesque plaited straw "skeps" that ~~were~~ ^{were} the standard trade mark of the ten pound syrup pails that stocked every farm pantry in those days. It was not till years later that we questioned the ethics of using bees to advertise the merits of corn syrup.

Another unique feature of the Waller farmyard were the

guinea hens. Their buildings were closely surrounded by thick bush and wandering poultry became easy prey to a prowling coyote.

Another peril was from aerial predators known generally as "chicken hawks". The guinea hens seemed much more alert than other fowls and at the first sign ^{of} danger their shrill screams could be heard a great distance and the chickens would run for shelter. The guinea hens themselves never appeared to be in any danger. A neighbor once told us that they normally lived to be fifty years old so were lacking something as a toothsome morsel for their enemies.

No story of the family would be complete without reference to the natural skill and inventive faculties of Uncle Bill--William Waller. Unfortunately there was little evidence left of some of his earliest projects as I grew up, but as youngsters we heard our parents tell of a creamery that he had set up in the vicinity of Silver Creek which was the west boundary of the Waller farm. Bill Waller felt there was a need for some industry of this type, as the early settlers around Binscarth and Russell had developed large herds of cattle. How long the creamery operated I do not know, not too long before it was destroyed by fire. I seem to recall a pile of old bits of machinery by the creek, pointed out to us as "^{Waller's} Bill ~~Waller's~~ Creamery". These remains would disappear in one of those war salvage drives that swept the country between 1915 and 1918. All the Waller inventions were not as ambitious, but all served a useful purpose. A simple wire-stretcher was something we used very often and one hung in our old workshop for many years. Later an efficient bag-holder was a treasure indeed when a man had to work by himself. But the one that really impressed us was the Bill Waller self-latching farm gate. Nearly all farms in those days had those ^{barbed barbed} dreadful wire contraptions that the Chinese would have called

the "Gates of Perpetual Sorrow". One day we returned from town to confront a fine new painted gate of lumber construction at the point where the road started through the Waller farmstead. Unlatching it from the post, it swung open without any effort on our part. When released, by some ingenious combination of springs it swung back and latched itself. Compared to the man and animal traps that passed for gates in those days, it was a miraculous accomplishment. If only our farm economy had been a little more buoyant Bill Waller could have started a good gate business.

Uncle Bill, as well, appreciated the natural beauty of the Silver Creek valley almost at their back door. It must have been a ~~great~~ thrill for him to discover a colony of beavers building a dam. Visitors were only allowed to see this from the top of a high ~~bank~~ bank so as not to disturb the busy animals. I can recall one afternoon when we were escorted down through the dense tree growth and on our return discovering the marvel of the white bark peeling from a birch tree, a small piece of which we were allowed to take home. It was a personal tragedy for Bill Waller on the day he discovered that some miscreant had trapped his beloved beaver and destroyed their dam.

Then, of course, there was Waller's Hall--an institution in Binscarth for many years. With its lofty ceiling and high stage it provided the backdrop for many good amateur plays, box socials, school concerts, masquerade balls and countless dances. Here the political pundits of the day presented their wares to sincere and attentive audiences who might still change their minds before election day. For years Bill Waller was the general manager and caretaker because he was the only person who understood the complexities of the vast furnace required to heat the hall in winter. This was fuelled from a

from a great stack of cordwood piled between the hall and the livery stable. No other building in the vicinity had a stove that would accommodate cordwood lengths so the pile was reasonably safe from unauthorized visitors. All of us who attended the old Binscarth School will recall the rehearsals for Christmas Concerts in the Hall. Teachers involved in the final desperate throes of program presentation marshalled us down there and drilled us till we were as near letter perfect as possible. Generally the Hall required about five hours to heat up on a winter's day and the early phases of this process were usually accompanied by ~~smk~~ smoke, so everyone came out with red eyes and snuffly noses.

When the old Waller Hall was finally destroyed by fire our community lost a link with a romantic period of the past, when Binscarth audiences joined in the laughter and tears and merriment that entered and left its swinging doors.

As the years for retirement approached, Mrs. Waller must have felt at last that the dream she had cherished since leaving Ontario must now come true. During those long seasons of work on the farm she had never lost sight of plans for a large and spacious home where old friends and neighbors would gather, and where there would still be the garden and the berry bushes, and of course, the lilacs. She had an energy far beyond her years, and it put many of we younger people to shame. They finally made the move to Binscarth and into the large, grey bungalow that was so well known as to be one of the town's landmarks. And to complete that dream of relaxation they purchased one of the first hard-top ~~sedan~~ sedan cars seen in Binscarth, and it was a heart warming sight to see them moving along the streets and down the roads at a stately pace under the skilful guidance of Uncle Bill at the wheel.

As one thinks back over those years we must classify the Wallers more as an institution than just a pioneer family. They brought to the Binscarth district their sterling qualities of good citizenship, along with a capacity for hard work, all blended with an appreciation of the finer graces of rural life that will always leave a warm glow with those of us who had the good fortune to enjoy their neighborliness and hospitality.

Edward W. Hollway and Nurse Nora Hollway

Just as no story of Binscarth would be complete without the Waller family-- no mention of Wallers should omit two people who had close early association with them, and also with the Binscarth community; Mr. E. W. Hollway and his sister, Nurse Nora Hollway.

Edward Hollway had come from England to Canada in 1898 at the age of twenty three, and was first employed at the Waller farm, gaining a variety of experiences before securing a place of his own-

(1970) . Here he shared the accomplishments and frustrations that made up the life of a Manitoba farmer seventy years ago. Politicians told them they were building a new nation, and philosophers said it was a better way of life, but they went ahead and did their best with the tools they had.

In 1907 Mr. Hollway disposed of his farm, livestock and equipment and went back for a short time to England. On his return to the West he took up land near Jansen, a district halfway between Yorkton and Saskatoon, residing there until retirement to Salmon Arm, B.C.

As youngsters we, of course, always called him "Mr. Hollway" and looked forward to his visits because he invariably had some new and humorous stories about recent events in the community. There was no

was no radio, or T V, or even a gramophone to entertain us in those days and visitors were our main source of outside interest. He also had a hobby which fascinated us--photography--and as he had to develop his own negatives, the whole proceeding had the added charm of dark mystery about it. Sometime during those years he acquired what was generally called a "panoramic" camera. It was activated by a wind-up mechanism on the tripod stand which swung the camera in an arc and included a much wider view than the ordinary stationary box camera. This innovation was most useful for farm pictures which, in many cases, contained more of space than subject. One of his productions apparently had repercussions far from Manitoba, when he was impressed with the spectacle of a large field of stooks ~~was~~ almost buried under an unseasonably heavy snowfall in September. He sent a picture of it to one of the widely read British newspapers, and no doubt added some sort of a caption like "Manitoba's Golden Harvest, Sept, 190-Temp. Zero". Britain was still in the era of somewhat extravagant propaganda by the immigration authorities as to the fabulous qualities of the Canadian prairies-- a haven of "get rich quick farmers" with winters of "bracing ~~and~~ dry cold you never feel" and that type of thing. The publication of Mr. Hollway's harvest landscape scene brought some indignant reactions from immigration promoters, and perhaps a letter or two to "The Times" !

My youthful recollections always associated Mr. Hollway's visits with our stove-pipes taking fire. It was sometime later before the logic of this appeared because, during the immediate crisis, the family's energies were concentrated on watching events and developments. In those years our heating unit was a furnace in the cellar, the stove pipes being carried in various vertical and horizontal lengths that traversed rooms and hallways on their route



02430

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1907-Auction Sale at
the Hollway Farm.

E.W. Hollway

to the chimney on top of the house. If the fuel was partly green wood, as was often the case, the pipes accumulated a deposit of soot, which, after some weeks of alternate heating, cooling and drying, became inflammable.

It was customary to stoke up the furnace after noon dinner, and the arrival of visitors might easily divert attention and leave the dampers open. During subsequent animated discussions on the weather, politics, and the intransigence of the C.P.R., it was easy to forget heating problems, until that characteristic smell of burning soot became very evident. Then all hands adjourned to assigned posts throughout the house. Father went down to the lower regions to dump about half a gallon of salt in the furnace, and we just waited for things to die down and cool off. Once the soot burned itself out the real danger was past. No doubt it was Mr. Hollway's interesting stories that diverted our attention from the rapidly rising temperatures below -stairs, but if modern home dwellers have never experienced a stove-pipe fire they have really missed living. The sequel to one of these incidents was always the cleaning of the pipes the next day and that was a very messy job.

Nurse Nora Hollway

Early in the century Nora Hollway came to Binscarth, ostensibly to visit her brother, but no doubt urged by her ever adventurous spirit to explore new lands and distant places. The broad horizons of the prairie and parkland around Binscarth appealed to her, and whatever shortcomings there were in pioneer life presented her with a challenge to be met. She loved riding and spent many hours in the saddle, and her enthusiasm for the outdoors always conjured up in our imagination the exciting chase with foxhounds across the pastoral scene of England.

She was an expert nurse, and the field of her professional activities was very broadly circumscribed. In addition to the Binscarth district she spent considerable time in the Castleavery community, west of Russell. The Waller farm near Binscarth seemed a natural headquarters and her habitations there were as varied as her interests. For some time she had a small but very comfortable "shack" which she referred to as a cottage. Then, for about two summers, she occupied what we thought must be a delightful place to live-- a very large threshing outfit caboose on wheels which was stationed in a sheltered spot near the garden. She had it fitted out with all the amenities of home and it was really very comfortable. The kids at our school were then in the stage of building tree-houses, but if Miss Hollway did not try one it was not because she hadn't thought of it.

There were more good driving horses than saddle stock in our district, so Miss Hollway was usually breaking in a new one, but that was just another challenge. As school pupils we remember one of her steeds, Tommy by name, who was given a furlough to provide us with transportation during her absence for a month or so. Tommy combined a stubbornness of character with a singleness of purpose. These attributes, coupled with an aversion to work, were not just what was needed in a school pony. He no doubt felt there was something degrading about hauling a buggyful of kids to school, anyway, and at best it seemed a pointless existence. The crisis occurred one spring morning a short distance from home when he resolutely balked at crossing a small stream of water six feet wide and two inches deep, and neither vocal nor physical persuasion availed to move him. It was his last trip to school and he spent the rest of his free time lazing around the pasture. He did try some of his bag of tricks with Miss

Hollway one rainy day when he stopped suddenly with the idea of ejecting her into a muddy pool of water, but she was too good a rider to be taken unawares.

Sometime during those busy years there was a brief interlude when Nurse Hollway returned to England. When she came back to the Waller farmstead she was accompanied by a very large, and, she ^{everyone,} assured ~~it~~, a very purebred English Sheep dog. We all agreed that it looked more like a sheep than a dog because we had never seen anything before so completely hidden in a coat of tightly knotted curls. It adjusted itself easily to a life of comfort in the cottage until that dreadful day when it thought it was confronting a skunk that was investigating Mrs. Waller's chickens. Only Bowser's loyalty in defending the poultry yard saved him from eternal banishment, and Uncle Bill converted a large wooden crate and some old binder canvases into ^{isolation} quarantine ~~isolation~~ for him. Home remedies were ineffectual and eventually copious applications of Royal Crown Soap and the freshening summer winds made his presence bearable once more.

Those who remember Nurse Hollway must recall her delightful sense of humor. It never had an edge to it; it was sheer enjoyment of any comic situation, and it was this quality that endeared her to those in need of nursing care. No doubt her ready response to the humor of the moment led to a rather hilarious occurrence that Father and Mother often laughed about in later years.

A travelling company of players, who put on their performances in a huge tent, had come to Binscarth advertising a full scale presentation of "Uncle Tom's Cabin". My parents decided to see this and took Nurse Hollway and a friend with them. During the evening the artists went through almost every phase of Uncle Tom's colorful life as a Southern slave, although they admitted their inability to

to re-enact the scene where Eliza crosses the ice of the Ohio River with the blood hounds in hot pursuit.

However, they made up for this omission by staging a most elaborate and heart-rending finale following the death of little Eva. Now there were, and still are, a lot of Binscarth people whose warm hearts would be deeply moved by this scene, and Nurse Hollway was certainly not without emotion. But the directors of the production apparently felt that they should inspire everyone with the dramatic climax, and had rigged a sort of stretcher activated by a set of ropes and pulleys which would carry the departing Eva right up to Heaven (the top of the tent). Something about these intricate mechanical arrangements struck Miss Hollway as comical. As soon became apparent, someone had forgotten to oil the pulleys, and the stretcher, hoisted aloft in spasms like a sail, was accompanied by varied squeaking sounds which almost drowned out the emotional blowing into handkerchiefs by some of the audience. This was just too much, and Nora's suppressed mirth burst into outright laughter, and, when the stretcher, now a little lop-sided, prepared at last to enter the Pearly Gates (indicated by a large light) she became practically hysterical and had to be escorted outside. Fortunately the show was over, but they were halfway home before she regained her composure and apologized humbly to everyone for making such a scene. But no one could mention "Uncle Tom" to her for months afterwards.

When the First War broke out in August 1914, we knew Nora Hollway would become involved in it in some sphere. The challenge of service faced everyone, and she answered it by joining the Scottish Womens' Foreign Hospital Mission. This organization dispatched a group of trained nurses to Serbia early in hostilities. Accompanied by her sister, Dr. Edith Hollway, Nurse Hollway was assigned to an Army Hospital Unit. However, the Serbian armies were forced into retreat by the

Austrian-German offensive. Their only escape route lay through the rugged mountains to the west, and the Nursing Mission marched with them sharing their hardships and exposure, until they reached the Adriatic. The troops were evacuated to Corsica and the Hollway sisters reached Switzerland, and eventually England,

It would be hard today to measure the full contribution that Nurse Hollway made to our community. During those years there existed practically no equipped hospitals closer than Winnipeg or Brandon, and doctors were scattered very thinly in rural Manitoba. There are doubtless residents in the Binscarth area today who were ushered into the world under her professional eye, and she attended numerous cases of accident and emergency illness when people turned to her in their need. Hers was a life dedication to a calling that ~~was~~ faced discomfort and difficulty but never flinched from the responsibilities involved.