

HOMESTEAD HOMILIES

A Tale of Scottish Immigration



by

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The Characters

- I. Rolf & Lisel Braun (nearest neighbour to North)
- II. Bob & Mollie Canning (Second neighbour North)
- III. George & Marion Thompson (General Store in Two Creeks)
- IV. Henry Jones (HJ Ranch)
- V. Ray Paice (breaks horses)
- VI. Tom & Mary Harvey (Age 32 - The youngest newcomers)

Henry Visits the Brauns

Rolf and Lisel Braun emigrated from Germany to Canada in the summer of 1913 with their three sons and one daughter. They both came from farm families and decided to go to Canada where they could get almost free land where their family could grow up in a land where everyone was equal.

In 1922 Rolf and Lisel Braun, now in their late forties, had 'proved up' on their 640 acres (one square mile), on the east side of the Assiniboine river. By this time the two older Sons had met and married two sisters in Virden and had decided that farming was not for them. The youngest son, 19 year old Walther, loved the farm as much as his father did. The daughter, 17 year old Hellen, was her mother's faithful helper and her parents 'pride and joy'.

One day in June when Walther and Royce the hired man had left with their teams to cut and rack hay, Rolf and Lisel were sitting on the veranda for a rest before going back to work when Lisel heard a horseman coming.

Lisel said "Rolf, that's Henry coming, this is the first time he has been here this year."

"I believe you are right." he said.

When he rode into the yard they went off the veranda to meet him.

They both greeted him with a loud "Hello" and Rolf went with him when he went to put his horse in the stable. When they returned, they joined Lisel on the veranda. Henry was replying to a query from Rolf regarding the calf crop, there was a 'bang' of the screen door coming open suddenly and a blond replica of Lisel came flying out, shouting "Uncle Henry" and threw her arms around his neck. He gave her a peck on the cheek and holding her at arms length said "Well, what a pretty young woman you have grown up to be!" and gave her another hug.

"Have you finished up in the kitchen?" Lisel asked.

"No. But it will only take a few minutes and I'm coming right back out here.

"Alright," her mother said "but there is no hurry, Henry will be staying over night".

Henry was a bachelor, not her actual uncle, but had known her since she was nine years old. He was about the same age as her parents and was very helpful to them when they arrived here. He had a ranch about twelve miles east of the Braun homestead with quite a few hundred beef cattle.

Henry asked "How the harvest went last fall"

"Well," said Rolf "we had a very good year with both the wheat and the oats. Four of us farmers brought in a threshing machine from Virden and each of us helped the other. Yes, we had a very good year".

'I saw Walther and Royce cutting hay when I rode in".

"Yes I think we will need a bit more this coming winter. We now have fourteen cows but only need one milker. I thought that the next time you make a shipment I was going to going to ask if we could sell some of ours with yours?"

"Certainly" he said "you are perfectly welcome."

"I'll be having a round up this fall and will ship some to the railway in Virden."

"Uncle Henry" Hellen asked "how many cowboys do you have?"

"Four and Old Bill, my cook and general handyman." he replied.

How much land do you have?"

"One section, six hundred and forty acres."

"How can you run all those cows on land the same size as our farm?"

"Well," he said "I bought the one section on the Snake river where I have my house and other buildings and run the cows on vacant Government land."

"But doesn't..." "Hellen," her mother said "that's enough questions for now."

Rolf asked "Henry, that was a cold winter we had, how did the cows winter?"

"Pretty good; as you know the land along the Snake where I am has a lot of poplar trees along the edge of it and is below the level of the surrounding land giving them protection. I have men out haying now. As you know cows are not like horses. Horses

will paw through the snow for food where cows will not. Our main problem is wolves. All of us carry a rifle in a scabbard on our saddles. We managed to kill a few but they also killed some cattle. It's an ongoing battle.”

Henry's Sad Story

“Henry,” said Lisel “we have been friends since we first came here. You told us that you inherited the family farm just north of Winnipeg and that you sold it and started the 'HJ' Ranch. You lead everyone to believe that you are a bachelor. You are not, are you?”

He put his hands over his eyes and put his elbows on his knees and was quiet for a couple of minutes. Then he shook his head and said “No, I'm actually a widower but could never talk about it.”

“I have suspected it for a long time by the way you seem to enjoy being around our family and especially the children.”

“Lisel, do you mind if I just go for a walk for a few minutes then I'll come back and try to tell you about it.”

As he left he noticed her attractive well-kept flower beds which brought back memories of years gone by, when his own house looked like that, when there was a wife and child around his place. There was also a garden like this with corn, potatoes, carrots, beets etc, It hurt trying to recall memories that he had kept buried all these years. He didn't know where the time went but he heard Lisel call him in for supper.

After an excellent meal with casual conversation he said if they would be patient with him and treat it as confidential, he would try to tell his story.

Lisel asked “Did you ever tell it to George and Marion Thompson at the general store in Two Creeks?”

“No, I just couldn't do it.”

After a long pause he said “It happened the third summer we were here, before you arrived, I only had one man then, nineteen years old, he is now my foreman.”

“It was a nice sunny morning and Ellen and I ,along with our two year old son Eric, had planned to to go to the general store in Two Creeks, a distance of eight miles. The Thompsons were friends and we would stay over night with them and return early the following morning.”

“We had been having trouble with wolves. Just a couple of weeks before this we lost a cow to the wolves. She was laying down giving birth when the wolves attacked and killed both the cow and calf. I didn't have very many cows at that time and it was quite a loss. Now I had two pregnant cows about ready to calf in a corral near the barn. Joe had never handled a situation like this. In talking it over with Ellen it was decided that she and Eric would go and be back early the next morning.”

“Next morning the newborn calves were doing fine but when noon came and no sign of Ellen and Eric I was very concerned. I saddled a horse and started for Two Creeks, When I was about two miles from Two Creeks I saw the horse with something behind it. When I got closer I saw that the horse was over a mile off the road with all the grass beaten down by a lot of horses. We have seen this herd many times and it would appear that the Mare saw the wild horse herd and tried to join them. Ellen just wasn't strong enough to stop her.”

“I came to the little body of my son Eric. It looked like he may have fallen over the front of the buggy and was struck by a hoof then run over by a wheel. A short distance further was the body of his mother. Her head was twisted at a strange angle. I picked her up in my arms, straightened her head with tears running down my cheek I kissed her. The lips that were vibrant, warm and loving were now cold and unresponsive. I don't know how long I sat there holding her, I heard the horse neighing and went to see what the situation was. It seemed that the left front wheel broke off and the axle ploughing into the earth had thrown Ellen off head first, breaking her neck. The harness had tangled around the mare's hind legs and the left shaft had broken and was stuck in the ground immobilizing her. I laid Ellen down and went back to my saddle, pulled the rifle out of the scabbard and went to the mare. I put a shell in the chamber, put the muzzle of the rifle between the mare's eyes and pilled the trigger.”

“All of the things that had been in the buggy were scattered on the ground. I found two blankets, I wrapped one around Ellen and with her in my arms I looked up to the sky and said “God I thank you for allowing me to have them for a short period of time but I

ask you to forgive me for failing to be a good husband and father.” I then placed her face down across the saddle. I then picked up my little son Eric, put the other blanket around him and tied him behind the saddle.”

“I led the horse the remaining two miles into the Thompsons. While walking, I was thinking I was responsible for the deaths, the woman I loved, my loving trusting son and the unborn child. I had valued two cows and two calves more than my family.”

“When I met George and Marion. I just said the horse ran away and they were killed. All three of them cried together.”

“I went to see Jack Smith the blacksmith, where I borrowed a team and wagon to take the bodies, lumber, nails, tar, etc that the Thompsons sent with me. They offered to come and help but I refused and said that 'Joe and I could handle it.' I was asked to wait until morning because it was almost dusk now. I said 'No, I couldn't sleep anyways.'”

“It was almost dawn when I arrived home and just told Joe 'The horse had run away.' He loved little Eric like he was his own. He started breakfast while I put the horses in the barn. After breakfast we went to a small hill overlooking the river where there was a bluff of poplars. I had built a seat where Ellen and I used to sit. I pointed to a spot and asked Joe to dig there while I made the coffin. I made it wide enough for Ellen and Eric to be side by side with Ellen's arm around Eric, as if they were both sleeping.”

“We both cried as we stood looking into the coffin for the last time. I went into the house and found Ellen's Bible. There was a bookmark in it and when I opened it, it was the story of Jesus birth that she had read to Eric. I reread the story over the open casket then we nailed the top down and buried them.”

“Folks” he said “if you don't mind I would like to go to bed.” “Certainly.” Lisel said “You know where you usually stay. Good night and thank you for telling us your sad story.”

Horse Trap

Next morning at breakfast everyone seemed happy to have Henry visiting and after the meal was finished he said “Now the main reason I came over is entirely different from our discussion of last night but, I must say I feel better having told someone about it.”

“As I mentioned last night I would like to ship about two hundred cattle this fall. I'll need some more horses and riders to trap a wild herd along the edge of the Assiniboine where they go to drink. I spoke to Bob Canning, your neighbour to the north about it and he is going to help. He is particularly interested in a pony he heard about that he would like to get for his eleven year old daughter.”

“I'll bring a couple of men and if you could bring two men and with Bob and all of us with axes, we could build a trap in a couple of days.” Under Henry's directions, the poplar trees next to the river were felled forming an impenetrable barrier between the trail and the river. Next the gates were formed at each end.

There was an area at the south end where there was a beach the horses came to drink shortly after daybreak.

The trap proved to be an outstanding success with each participant getting the number and type they were looking for and Bob Canning getting the pony he wanted for his daughter.

Now trying to 'break' this horse for his daughter proved more difficult than was expected. Tying her head close to a post and with a coat over her head, he stopped her trying to bite at him.

The Devil Horse

When trying to get the blanket and saddle on was also very difficult with her bucking, squirming and kicking. As soon as he sat in the saddle and took the coat off her head, she immediately fell and rolled on her side. Bob jumped to his feet immediately but she was just as fast and came after him with ears laid back and teeth showing as she charged after him right to the fence. She got his shoulder in her teeth and threw him to the ground. Before he could stand up, she hit him with one of her front hooves. Two men on horseback managed to get ropes around her neck and got her under control.

Bob was seriously injured with a broken shoulder, broken ribs and possibly internal injuries. A team and wagon with a considerable amount of hay and blankets was used to keep him as comfortable as possible on the twenty-eight-mile journey to the hospital in Virden.

Rolf was very angry and came out of the house with a rifle, determined that he was going to shoot that “devil horse”. Lisel intervened saying “Don't kill her yet, let's breed her and after the colt is born and weaned, shoot her. The colt was a filly and looked like the mother.

The Harveys Arrive in Manitoba

In 1924 Tom and Mary Harvey and their four boys, Frank (8), Alastair (4), Tommy (2 ½), and finally Neil arrived in Virden.

On the map in Virden it showed the property as being on the edge of the Assiniboine River. In reality it was about twenty five feet above the river.

The Government representative in Virden suggested that they have a discussion with Rolf Braun before making any definite decisions. They erected their tent and decided to visit their neighbour the next morning. They hitched up the team and wagon they had purchased in Virden and went over to visit the Brauns.

They were welcomed most enthusiastically and Rolf proceeded to show them the exterior of their farmyard. “You will notice,” he said, “that we have a large bluff (of trees) on the west and northwest of our home. This helps to protect us from the winter winds but it must be a bluff where there is water for a well. I was fortunate to find a man that could find water with a willow 'V' branch. You may also notice that my barns are between the trees and the house giving additional protection from the winter winds. We also have two pumps, one with a hand pump in the kitchen sink and one in the barnyard.”

“In addition to that it is important to have a tight warm house.”

Tom asked Rolf if he would come over and help him find a good location for the house so that he could get started. Rolf said, “Tom it is the end of August and it is too late to start building a house this year. We will have snow by the end of September. I would suggest that you get building materials and supplies and build a temporary structure for the winter but you should have a well.” Tom asked how the man found his wells. “I'll show you but it doesn't work for me.” He found a willow twig shaped like a chicken's wishbone but they could see that nothing was happening. Tom tried but with

the same negative result. Mary, not to be outdone by the men, asked if she could try it. She walked around a short distance when the wishbone twisted in her hand and pointed down. Needless to say, all were surprised and incredulous at what was happening in her hands.

Both families gathered around the Brauns' kitchen table planning what would be required for the Harvey family for the coming winter. In addition to this Tom said he would sketch up the requirements for the temporary dwelling.

The Brauns said that they would look after the boys until the parents returned.

Three days later they returned with everything on the list plus everything for their temporary home, a hired man with a wagon load of lumber who would also help to dig the well and help with the construction. There was also a large red and white Newfoundland dog and two little piglets.

Their home was about 18' X 12' and had hay with lime to keep mice out, packed between the inner and outer walls.

One night Neil, the baby, got out of bed and went for a drink but found the water pail was frozen, he found another container and started crying, it was coal oil. Mary put her fingers in his throat to make him sick, made him drink milk, then made him throw up again. This was a harbinger of what was to happen to him in the next few years.

The Harveys' First Winter

Tom built a sleigh and was teaching Rover the dog to pull it. When he pulled it in the snow, the snow would ball up on the runners. Rolf suggested that he take the sleigh inside and when it was warmed up, keep dampening the runners. Then, when they are real wet, take the sleigh outside and let it freeze. After it is frozen, put a thin film of ice on the runners. It worked.

A few days before Christmas it was very cold, the snow was almost three feet deep and the top of the snow was frozen like ice with the constant cold winds enabling people and animals to walk on the surface. Tom, after breakfast and before daylight, took off with Rover and the sleigh to go to Virden. There were a few things that they needed but the main reason was for Christmas presents for the children. Christmas eve came and still Tom had not returned. The children were very concerned and so was

Mary. She looked outside outside with a heavy cold wind blowing the snow horizontally.

Tom and Rover were making fairly good time out of Virden until they encountered the snow. The wind came very high and it was very slow going. Eventually he was so tired from bucking the wind and snow he felt just they just had to rest. He knew if he stopped he might freeze to death. He started to jump up and down on his heels and eventually broke through. After making the hole large enough, he pushed the loose snow under the ice aside until there was enough space for him and Rover. It was comparatively warm and they both slept. He arrived home after midnight where Mary met him with tears running down her cheeks. She said, "I was praying for you."

In the morning the children were all excited that their daddy was home and were overjoyed to find a Christmas stocking at the end of their bunk bed with presents in them.

In the spring, before the farmers could get on the land, Tom brought in all the lumber, shingles and hardware necessary to build the house, barn and equipment shed. He also brought in two carpenters from Virden to help all the neighbours that were also coming.

Due to the number of men present it was decided that both the house and barn could go up simultaneously with Tom looking after the house crew and Rolf supervising the barn crew.

The first winter in the new house was cold but more comfortable than the previous year. The central part was the kitchen with the big cook stove. Neil had a black cat that seemed to always be draped over his arms. Apparently the cat had asked to go out and then he forgot about it. Tommy heard a weak meow, opened the door, and found his kitty almost frozen. He laid the cat on the open oven door. to warm up. Neil was stroking his kitty and no one noticed that he closed the oven door. Shortly there was a strange noise around the stove. When the door was opened an apparition came screaming out and would run from one side of the room to the other and each time, tried to climb up the walls. Everyone was trying to catch him, but unsuccessfully then Mary came up to bat with the corn broom. The first two or three strikes missed but she eventually had a strike. There on the floor lay an almost naked cat. There were very few hairs left on his body. She wrapped him in a towel and dripped water into his mouth.

After a few days he was able to lap up milk. After a while when he was able to eat solid food. He would spit at Neil and try to run away from him. Neil could not understand why his kitty did not like him anymore.

Tom Tames The Devil Horse

Tom asked Rolf how his 'devil horse and foal are progressing?' "I think the Foal could be weaned now so one of these days I'll take her out and shoot her before she kills someone like she almost did to Bob. He has recovered but he will never break another horse."

"I have an idea Rolf; will you sell that horse to me? I'll give you fifteen dollars for her."

"No Tom, I would give you the horse but she is just too dangerous."

"I was in the cavalry during the Great War," Tom said "and an old Englishman showed me how to tame a difficult horse. I would like to try it with this horse. The fifteen dollars is only the price of an average wild horse and I believe this one, if she is tamed, could be worth much more than that."

"Yes, that is true." Rolf said "If she doesn't kill you, she's yours."

They put a halter on her and she followed all the way home, like there was nothing wrong with her.

After she was put in a stall and the halter rope was tied to keep her there, she turned her head watching him leaving and tried to squeeze him against the side of the stall. Tom gave her an open hand slap on the nose and she stopped it.

She was led out for a walk daily and when he stroked her she would make like she was going to bite him but each time she got an open hand slap on the nose.

Tom continued to work with his horse that he called Lady and proceeded to make friends with her. He would take her out for walks at the end of a rope, pet her and talk to her like a person until she recognized her name. When he called her by name, he would give her a small piece of apple as a reward. Eventually he would call her a

whistle and again he would give her a reward. The time came when he could whistle and she would come running with her tail up high like they were playing.

Next he put a blanket on her back and she shrugged it off. He immediately put a hand on each side of her face and talked to her telling her not to do that. After this it was just a process of walking with the blanket, the saddle then Tom in the saddle over a period of several weeks.

Frank was introduced to her until she got used to him. Tom gave Lady to him to go and come home from school for all the work he did around the farm.

Neil

Generally when Mary went to milk the cows, she would take Neil along and he would play with the two barn cats. This morning it sounded like the cats were fighting or being mauled. She turned around to see what was happening and there was Neil standing under this “devil horse” squirting milk in the mouth of the cats with her head turned watching him and the the cats yelling over which one would get the milk. Mary jumped up off the stool, spilling some of the milk, yelling at Neil to come away from that horse.

Neil was a fair-skinned, blond, blue-eyed angelic little boy that loved everything and everybody. He assumed everything was similar to his philosophy and he had absolutely no fear.

Mary had a snare line where she caught rabbits,. The meat was like chicken and made good stew. In the winter time she got thirty five cents for the hides.

One morning about the middle of May, Mary came out and told Alastair and Tommy to listen and keep an eye on Neil. She said he was in the summer kitchen with his toys. The door to the house and the one to this side were locked. After their mother left the boys had a great idea, they would try to ride the pigs. This created a great deal of noise but they finally cornered one. Alastair held the pig while Tommy got on it's back and hung on with arms and legs. He was doing pretty good until the squealing pig went under a chicken wire fence. The pig got through but Tommy was left on the fence.

They decided that the pigs were too smart for them and were trying to find something else to do when their mother returned and asked how Neil was. They said they thought he must be alright, that they hadn't heard anything from him. Mary went up the stairs into the summer kitchen and Neil was not there. The door to the main kitchen was still locked and the windows on both sides of the kitchen were still open like she left them.

Suddenly she noticed that the 'scrub board' was propped against the wall under the back window. She went around and saw where the grass was crushed where he had fallen.

It was easy to see where he started walking away from the house into an open field where he tramped with his bare feet in the new grass that had an old stubble from last year's grass fire. He was not in sight and there was no reply when his mother called for him. Alastair was told to run out on the field and tell his dad that eighteen-month-old Neil, had run away from home.

Tom and the two hired men got on horseback and were looking for him. Frank on his horse 'Lady' was sent to the General Store, about five miles inland where there are generally a number of people around and word would travel to the other farms. By noon hour there were many men on horseback and even a few wagons with women making meals for everyone, but there was still no sign of Neil. The search extended for miles up and down the river but when dusk came there was still no sign of him and many had to leave to do their chores. One of the hired men came in and asked for a lantern, He walked along the bank high above the river to see if there were any animal trails leading down to the river, He found one and after walking down a few yards he found a wolf's den and there was Neil lying there, sound asleep. He carried him back up the trail, got on his horse and took him back to his very happy mother. He was black all over except for his face and the soles of his feet. When asked who washed his face and hands, he said "The doggie did it."

His mother asked "Were you not cold with only the under pants on?" "No," he said, "the doggie keep me warm."

Mary, with tears running down her face, thanked God for saving her baby.

Burned Barns and Mosquito Bites

There was an equipment shed built against the side of the barn with a sloping roof. Alastair and Tommy would run the length of the shed roof and jump into a haystack. In this instance Neil insisted he wanted to do this too. He was helped up the ladder and Tommy, with a few stones in his pocket, started throwing them at the wasps nest. He finally hit it and the wasps came out en masse. The two older boys ran and jumped in the hay but Neil just stood there screaming until Alastair went back up, grabbed Neil and both of them landed in the hay. With the screaming and noise their mother came running to see who was killed. There was a severe scolding and they were forbidden to jump in the hay anymore.

As punishment for the two older boys for the previous shed roof incident, they were to cut wood after supper. They complained that they didn't know how to cut wood and were promptly told they were about to learn. A length of wood was placed on the saw horse, one boy would sit on the wood while the other one would use the buck saw. The next complaint was about mosquitoes biting them. Their mother solved that problem by lighting a small fire up wind then put green branches and green leaves on it to make it smoke. Neil wanted to know why she did that? She explained that the bugs do not like the smoke and wouldn't bite the boys. A short time later when Tommy was sitting on the wood, he said "Mom there is smoke coming out of the barn door."

Tom, Frank and Mary ran to the barn and there was Neil with a fire on the barn floor. When asked what he thought he was doing he said "The bugs were biting the horsies".

All the horses in the barn were saved but the barn burned down.

Tom's New Car

In 1926/1927 Tom had 480 acres mostly in wheat but there was also some oats and barley and had 'bumper crops'. He decided that he would like to buy a car. Mary wasn't too excited about it but she could visit friends and go shopping. Tom made a deal with the sales man for a 1925 Chevrolet touring car. The salesman explained what the pedals were for, that the two gas and spark levers on the steering wheel had to be

set 'just so' before you turn the crank to start it. Also, make sure the gear lever is in neutral before starting the car. Tom said, "Go over that once more and I think I'll be ok."

The car was a Chevrolet Touring car with curtains that could be hooked in place in inclement weather. One other thing was that the front springs protruded about sixteen inches in front of the radiator.

The salesman went over it again and then he said "Now you can drive the car home and your wife can drive the buggy." "No," said Tom "you have to deliver it." There was considerable discussion on the subject but the car was finally delivered to the farm, twenty eight miles away and was left parked about three feet from the side of the house.

At daylight next morning Tom was out looking at his car. He decided that he would see if he could remember how to start it. After setting the two levers on the steering wheel about half way, found what he thought might be 'neutral' on the gear shift and turned on the switch, and got around the front to 'crank' the motor. With a few more tries he found 'neutral' and the engine started with a terrible roar that awakened everything within a great distance. After turning both levers lower the engine emitted a little less noise. Now there was a bit of a problem trying to find a gear that would move him backwards. When he tried to move the gear shift lever there was a terrible grinding noise. Then he remembered that he was to press one of the pedals on the floor. Now he thought, he was getting somewhere, he took his foot off the pedal and there was an unholy crash as the springs went thorough the wall and the engine stalled. Mary came running out to see if he had really killed himself, with her long dark blond hair and screaming baby 'Mamie' in her arms. When she saw the situation, the fear for his safety became anger. He said he would get a horse and pull the car back far enough to get it started. Mary's angry reply was "No you will not. Have Frank drag it over to edge of the open pasture land. I'm going back to bed."

From then on, there was a lot back-firing, grinding etc. He finally disappeared, emulating a large black rabbit.

Noon hour came and there was still no sight of Tom. Everyone was watching for him all afternoon. Then everyone had supper and still no Tom. By this time Mary was no longer angry at him, she was getting very concerned. Finally when it was getting quite

dark when one of the children said “Here comes Daddy.” and sure enough there were two lights bobbing along on the prairie. He came driving into the farm yard right up to the same spot where the salesman had left it.

The Depression Arrives

1929 – 1930: In September 1929 Tom and Mary went on a walk to look at the wheat field, He picked a stalk of wheat and said “Mary, look at the head of this stalk. It's as good as last year and maybe better.” The threshing crew should be here next Monday. They considered the possible value of that golden field. Then the conversation changed to getting things ready for the arrival of the threshing crew.

One day when Frank was on his way home from school on Lady, he had been asked to come by the general store and pick up the mail. The store had a telephone line to Virden and the word is that the stock market had collapsed and all the banks were closed and no one had any money to buy wheat or anything else.

Tom went to the general store to get confirmation of this apparent tragedy. It would appear that banks and other major investors had been greedy, buying on speculation on stocks that were over valued.

There was a lot of conversation regarding 'What do we do now that there is no one buying our grain?'

Tom went home and told Mary the terrible news. We have an excellent three hundred acres of wheat and there is no point in harvesting it. No one has money to buy it.

The Newspaper headlines read “Black Tuesday” for October 29, 1929.

Tom and Mary decided to go over to the Braun's to see what they were going to do. Rolf said they had come there directly from Germany; they have proved up on their six hundred and forty acres, they don't owe anything and they can grow nearly anything they need. They are going to stay there and see what happens.

Tom and Mary agreed that they were qualified to apply for the balance of their six hundred and forty acres, but why do it? Yes they too could live off the land but...

Mary's solution to unsolvable problems was "Let's pray about it". Christmas came and went. The winter passed and the spring of 1930 came.

They had several letters with his two sisters and their husbands in Toronto. Yes things were bad there also but with his trade as a Cabinetmaker/Carpenter, there should be work there or perhaps in Peterborough. They couldn't sell the farm, equipment, horses or the few cows they had. The horses and cattle were turned loose on the prairie.

Returning To The East

Tom took the car into a garage in Virden to have it checked over. He also bought two extra 30" x 3 1/2" tires plus several extra inner tubes and patch kits.

At home on the farm he fastened two 2x4s under the car and left them protruding out about three feet behind the car to support wooden box the width of the car.

The car held: Tom, Mary, Frank (14), Alastair (10), Tommy (8), Neil (6), Duncan (4), Mamie (2).

The box on the back of the car contained a large tent, cooking equipment, food, bedding, clothes, etc.

When they left Mary just had to look back at their four bedroom home they were leaving. (no she did not become a pillar of salt) and the successful farm that they had built. It was the middle of June, 1930.

The road to Virden was a 'dirt' road, but not too bad in dry weather. There was a stop of one day there to say goodbye to friends. The road to Winnipeg was questionable at times but was passable. From Virden, it took a little over two weeks. Tom had the brakes replaced in Winnipeg. While he was waiting he enquired about the condition of the roads through northern Ontario. He was told that there were none. There may be a trail but no actual roads. People normally go south through the US and come back into Canada at Sault Ste Marie. The decision was made that they would go straight through northern Ontario. One of their problems was that if it rained they would have to wait until the rain stopped then continue to stay until the tent and road dried up. There were many memorable events like when the trail came to a lake it would go half way

around the lake then continue going east. When they came to a river there was generally a ferry. This would usually consist of a large raft with ropes fastened to each shore.

One time they were trying to get up a hill but could not quite make it. He backed up and had everyone get out and he took a run at it but to no avail. He was just going to empty the box when a car came along, an eight cylinder Packard. The man in his late twenties, asked if he could help? Tom explained that he was having trouble trying to get up the hill. The man asked if they had a rope, that he was quite certain that he could pull the car up the hill. He pulled the car up the hill with no apparent effort. When he came to the top of the hill he accelerated and there was Tom, white knuckled, big eyed and white faced hanging on to the steering wheel. When one of the 3 1/2" tires hit a pot hole, the car would swerve in that direction and he knows he is travelling in excess of the recommended top speed of thirty five mph, causing the car to swerve from side to side. When the Packard stopped and the driver came back, he found Tom leaning beside the car, not sure if his legs would hold him. The young man untied the rope from both cars and said "I'm sorry but my mind wasn't on what I was doing and took you farther than I intended." Tom thanked him and asked how fast he was going. "Only about forty five." Tom said "It seemed an awful lot faster than that to me, but thanks again.

They were about half a mile from the top of the hill and looking back he could see the rest of the tribe coming with the children running ahead.

There were many stops and starts, toilet stops, flat tires, etc. until they arrived at a very small village called Markstay in northern Ontario.

The brakes were worn out from the rough country they had passed through. There were no garages and Tom's money was running very low. He asked if there was any chance of finding a job but there was none. He saw the cheese in the store came in a round wooden container. So he asked the store owner if he had any empty ones and received an affirmative reply. The car only had rear breaks, so he replaced the worn out brake shoes with wooden ones. In the meantime the store owner had been checking around and asked Tom if he would be willing to 'cut pulp wood'? He then explained that it consisted of cutting down poplar trees, removing the bark and cutting them into four foot lengths and pile them in cords. (4' x 4' by 8'). There was a two room trapper's

cabin on the property that they could use. It took a month to earn enough money to get to Toronto. Tom, Mary and Frank worked in the woods and Alastair was to look after the younger ones. He and Tommy made a great discovery in that there was a creek flowing a short distance behind the cabin, and there were fish in it. After bending a safety pin into a hook, a piece of string and a pole they were ready to go fishing. They caught quite a few, some up to four or five inches then a 'dog' came along and started stealing their fish. Yelling at it did not help so they each grabbed a switch and chased the dog away. Later it appeared that the dog was in reality a cub bear.

Tom had two married sisters in Toronto and for a few days the family was divided between them. A reporter from the Toronto Star heard of their arrival, took pictures of the car with the box on the back and with the entire family. It appeared on the front page of the Toronto Star Weekly with the caption "First known car to pass through Northern Ontario."

Tom's younger sister's husband in Peterborough had a job available for him in Peterborough where the Ovaltine Company had built a large new building. It was building furniture, cupboards, shelving and finishing all the trim. He moved his family to Frank Street in Peterborough.

The End
