

Draft

MAY 24, 1909

Gramma Hilda Hindle of Two Mile

Gramma Hindle came over from England to settle in Canada many years ago. Of her trip from England and her early years in Canada, she recalls:

The ship was very crowded with such a lot of us on it. One exciting part was that we had to stand still. We were on the water for nine days when it should have taken five and we had to keep perfectly still because of the icebergs. They didn't damage the ship but you could feel a bump once in a while. But that was all. We just sort of ran into a bunch of them.

While we were on board we got word that Edward VII had passed away. He had followed Queen Victoria. I was fifteen then. They gave us a pound coin or that's what I thought at the time. It wasn't though. It's just a coin to commemorate her sixtieth reign.. It's in this little purse and has been in there for all these years. ~~I was in 1909~~ and I was in 1909 that we came. We lived in Vancouver for two years and I got married and went to the Prairies. It was interesting how I met my husband. He came to the house to get a room. He was clearing land there. My sister went to answer the door and I was right behind here. I was shy and was leaning over here shoulder. He told me after. He said, "As soon as I saw those blue eyes, I fell in love with you."

"We were married and went to a farm in Alberta about one hundred and twenty nine miles north of Edmonton. Somewhere up near Westlock in the vicinity of Vermillion. It is west of Edmonton. When I knew I was pregnant, we moved off the farm and went to the city. We never did go back out there again. I lived in Vermillion for a little while and then I went to see my husband's mother. She had a farm up there. She traded some property in Vancouver for the farm and then she gave it to us.

"Allan Benson used to deliver groceries to me for the short time I lived in Vermillion. There was a store and he used to deliver the groceries for them. They squatted on our farm. I don't know if it was before or after we bought it, but he lived on the farm. There was he and his dad and his brother George. We met again in British Columbia.

"When we came up here to this farm, of course we had no idea where it would be. My husband went out first to visit - We couldn't get out until the ninth of May. He tied the horses to the fence and then he walked over because the ice was on the snow - you know how the ice forms on top of the snow? He was afraid it would cut the horses' ankles, and once he got off the path, ^{so} he just tied the horses up and went ahead to look around and see what was what. There was a one room log shack. We all went out on the ninth of May. We had lived in town one winter.

"Tom had warned me to be careful when you go in because there is a hole in the floor. Cattle got in and they had punched a hole through to the cellar. It was sort of ^adug-out cellar. When I walked in, my arms full of goods, I walked right smack into the hole to the cellar. It wasn't very deep so it didn't bother me much. We had Bernard then. He was about three years old. He was about four and a half when my daughter was born.

"Tom really had to teach me how to do many things. He taught me how to make butter because we were getting lots of milk. He was milking three cows and of course making butter from all of it and selling it in New Town. I didn't know how to do anything. He had to show me how to cook. He used to bake a cake every Sunday morning. One thing I never could learn to do and that was to milk a cow. I just couldn't get on to it. Somebody told me it was a good thing or I'd probably have to do that too. We lived off the farm, selling butter, eggs and chickens - the old chickens - and cottage cheese. I used to make quite a bit of cottage cheese. I would put it up in packets and sell it. This was in 1916. I didn't sell it to the men on the railway because they had just finished the railway when we came here.

"One time my husband had to cross the river with thirty pounds of butter and a fox skin. He had shot a fox and he was taking that in to town that day. He broke through the ice and hethrew everything back towards the bank so it wouldn't go in the river. The native who was running the boat helped him get out. The biggest danger was when he got to the other side because it was so cold. It was zero and the wind was blowing and his clothes froze on him like a suit of armour.

"The children were growing and it was very hard to get to school because it was so far. At first Bernard took correspondence courses. My daughter did too although she was not old enough really. I thought she might as well be doing some work. When she went to school she had to start at the bottom the same as everybody else. But she was too clever really. She skipped a grade and I didn't like that. I don't believe in skipping grades. I'd ask her a certain question that I wanted to learn about and sh'd say, "I didn't take that Mom. That was the year I skipped." They had to walk ^{from} /Stewart Forsyth's to the river to school - something like three miles to school. Right about where Ed Bouvelier lives there was a trail leading down to the river. There's a real nice road there now but way back then it was only a wagon trail- an awful road. After the trail they would go by boat. Sometimes they had to cross a little ferry. The big ferry boat went away and the bridge was out and then the little ferry was washed away too. This was the bridge at Four Mile, across the Kispiox road. The one that is there now is about the third bridge. The first one went out right after my baby was born. She was born in hospital and I got home before it went out. I could have crossed it in the boat because anytime I went to town I had to go by boat. That wasn't very often. We went all that winter without a bridge because they didn't start on the new one till spring.

"There was a high hill to our place - about a hundred and eighty feet high - from the main road. That was fun with the horses. I was a wonder they knew just where to stop and just how long to rest. They would though. Then they would go on a bit then stop again to take another little rest. You never had to tell them to stop, rest or go.

"It took about two years to build the bridge and during that time the children had to go by ferry to school. The boatman wouldn't be in a hurry to get them across. My husband went to see the government agent and told them this and all he said was, "Why don't you put a white man there?" He said they couldn't afford to put a boatman on. My husband was angry and said "Yes, but you can afford to drown people." It wasn't long after that they put a returned man on - even built him a little house by the ferry. The teacher wrote me a note about the kids being late for school and I answered it. I said, "If you had to walk for three miles, sometimes through

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fresh snow and then wait until the ferryman took his own time to come over and cross the river, maybe you'd be late for school too!" I know it was rude of me but I was fighting mad. I was disturbed because she didn't have any idea what she was saying.

"The children went to a one-room school and when it got cold they had to build fires to keep warm.

"Dr. Wrinch was a wonderful man. I met Brigadier General Arthur Wrinch one time. The granddaughter was only a little girl when they left Hazelton. Now she's married and has a daughter of her own. She was at the dance you know. We had a supper and a dance and she told my son how much she and her husband enjoyed it.

"My husband was quite the gardener. We got prized at the fair for butter and vegetables. I don't know how many prizes we got. My husband took several for his vegetables.

"I had to learn to sew. I remember my first sewing machine. I couldn't make it go and had to call the man that I bought it from. It happened that my husband was working in his warehouse you see and so I wasn't afraid to ask him. I said, "Will you come and show me how to run this machine. I can't make the darn thing go!". He got a big kick out of that. I sent to England and got a layette for my little girl but I made my little boy's clothes. You know when you notch everything and fit those notches together? Well, I very carefully sewed round all the notches and you can imagine the mess I made! I had never sewn at home and had no one to teach me so I didn't know a thing about sewing and my neighbour knew even less than I did. But my neighbour and I took comfort in each other. She used to walk a mile through the bush to visit me. She used to love to come to my house for tea. *She'd say she didn't know what it was about my tea but she sure loved to have tea with me. We took comfort in each other.*

She was French Canadian you know. Oh she had a terrible time. I could write a book on her life and what she had gone through. She was living here too and was my nearest neighbour you see, they lived just a mile through the bush. We got to be real good friends.

When I was pregnant I didn't tell Mother because my sister was expecting too.

Oh she wanted mother to be with her because she was a bigger baby than I was, and she would get homesick for our mother. So I told my husband, I said 'I'm not going to let mother know about it till afterwards'. She wouldn't believe it at first, we got our picture taken when Bernard was one month old, and I sent it to her, and she still wouldn't believe it. She said Oh, that's not her baby, she just borrowed their neighbours. She wasn't satisfied till she came all the way to Alberta to see it.

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"I had several illnesses. I don't know what I didn't have. I had to go to the hospital. I was going to go to Edmonton, but then there was a woman who took in patients, she was a very good nurse, so I went in when my baby was born. After I had my baby I got this other illness. I got cold in my ovaries somehow or other and was lying in a pool of inflammation. Then the doctor, she gave me what you call a peracment (scraping out the womb) without much anesthetic. I was telling another friend about it (a nurse) and she said "that's the cruelest thing I've ever heard, you having that without any anesthetic." It wasn't exactly without any anesthetic. The nurse would hold the cone over my nose and she would keep saying to me "Are you alright." If I didn't answer she would take the cone away because she was scared. They didn't understand enough about anesthetic then, but anyway when I got better she told me "You'd better go away for six months holiday and get all built up again." So, I did. I went to Vancouver and I stayed with my mother for three months. Then I stayed with my husband's mother for three months. I left my husband to 'batch' it.

Then I went back home and he wasn't batching either. He was working up on the Roche de Boule Mountain up here. He was

was working up there, so he was with the rest of the crew. And he wouldn't have starved because he was a good cook. He used to go out on lots of hunting parties before we were married and he'd always be the cook.

"We finally moved to town when my daughter started school. It was so hard for her to find a place to live. She did live with some people for a long time, in the same house that we had been living in, across from the hospital. It was a beautiful house there, a log house, but that got burned out and my daughter just happened to be home that weekend. She used to come home every weekend, but all her clothes and suitcase and everything was all burned up in the fire. So, after that, well, I forget what we did now. I guess she stayed home and went to school with her brother. Anyway, then my husband had a chance of a job at the hospital, you see, taking care of - they had their own dairy herd then, so he liked that. And there was another house on that place so they moved it over and fixed it all up and we lived there.

"My sister and my daughter used to work at the hospital. My daughter was there for about four years I guess. Then she wanted to make a change and Dr. Austin, who's in Vancouver now, but he was the doctor here then, he tore up her resignation twice. He just wouldn't accept it. Finally she told him "I'm going, Dr. Austin. I want a change. I want to get away."

They didn't do what they do now. They have shifts there, with different cooks, but she had to do it all. Monday's was bread making day. She had to make all the bread for the hospital and they used to can a lot of salmon until the government made them quit, you see. They made everybody quit buying salmon. But when they were putting the salmon away, she used to do all that. She'd go at five o'clock in the morning and lots of times she wouldn't come home till about nine in the evening 'cause she'd stay to see all the fish taken off the fires.

"Now she's holding down two office jobs in Alberta. They were on a farm. She homesteaded because she married an American, you see, and he wouldn't give up his nationality, so he couldn't homestead, so she had to homestead the farm. They are still on it. They have it so that she can't sell it without permission from him, and he doesn't want to sell it although he doesn't farm it himself. I think one of her sons

is going to farm it this year. Land is a good thing to have. They started to build a big beautiful home out there but he took to drinking. He had a brother who always got drunk. Then his brother got him started on drinking, and he got as bad as his brother. His brother died of it at Fort Saint John. She hasn't lived with her husband for years. She would have sold the farm if she had been able to. She should look into the laws.

"Before we went to Hazelton there was a daily newspaper and three restaurants running. You see, that was the gateway to the north. Everybody had to come here to go north. They came as far as Hazelton by steamer and then they went by pack trains. There were big pack trains then. There was a northern fellow, a Mexican man, I think it was Cataline. With his long hair, I think he was the first hippy I ever saw in my life. They said it was the rum he poured on top of his head. Whenever he drank he always poured the last of the drops on his head. Before we moved out to the ranch, he used to turn his horses loose and ours was their favourite place. A real stamping grounds. Poor things. Then my husband went out and fixed all the fences and the gates and everything, so they couldn't get in any more. I used to watch them going by. I felt sorry for them. They didn't have any pasture ground and just had to go out into the bush and eat whatever was in the bush.

We were on the farm for 15 years, or was it 16. We arrived May 24th, 1909. I guess that's when it was. So anyway, there were three hotels in the old town and they all seemed to burn down on New Year's Eve. They'd have those big parties I suppose. And then the bridges, they built the bridge again in 1938 - something like that, I suppose.

"There was one inbetween. The last one was a special kind of bridge. They called it the "Million Dollar Bridge." They put up the Bailey bridge first and then built the other bridge from that somehow. I can't explain how it was done. That was a long time ago. It was a very hard place to build a bridge.

"Plus the road itself took a lot of building up right there. There was a flood one time and they had to take all the

people that wanted to cross over by ferry.

"Our Ford car was the newest in the area. They say it was the best engine Ford ever put in a car.

"I have 15 grandchildren - 10 through my daughter and Bernard has five kids.

"Looking back on the years lots of changes have taken place. All around, for years everything seemed to stand still. Nothing moved, no building, no progress. Then, all of a sudden they are building and going ahead. Everyone seems to be busy. You see loads and loads of poles go by every day.

"Right now there is controversy whether we should all amalgamate. A lady came to see if we would amalgamate, but I said that I had no say in anything, I'm just renting here. It used to be my place before, but it isn't any more. I'm just living on it and I have no say in anything at all.

"Amalgamation would be a good thing. It would be good business. They could then organize a fire department and other things. They wouldn't have to duplicate in each town separately. But, then they would have to be big enough to get along.

"You see, at the very early days, when they started New Town, because Old Town was an Indian village, they decided to on account of the railroad and then when it came on time to move, there were only certain ones that would move over there. So they have been at logger heads ever since. I mentioned it to somebody not so very long ago, "I suppose they have forgotten that old feud," but they said, "Don't you believe it. They are as bitter about it as they ever were."

"You should have seen it when my sister came up, when she worked for awhile at the hospital, 'cause they just had Chinese cooks. Dr. Wrinch asked her if she would work there for awhile and she said she hated that Old Town, they ought to have buried it. When they were going to move, she said they should have moved over here and buried the Old Town.

"One thing I regret, though. They should have kept up the old Indian graveyard. Oh, that was beautiful when we first come in. The old graves and things that they had. They used to put people's personal belongings in there. The Natives

themselves didn't seem to bother about it.

"They gave up a nice home and a a nice job and everything to come up here, my Mom and Dad. Dad was head gardener for Kelly Douglas, and they had a nice home. I have a picture of that place. It was as comfortable as it could be. I don't know what took into their heads to come here. When I was sick and I was in the hospital my neighbour had my daughter, that is the French lady, and she brought her over to Mother. She was old and didn't want to look after a young child. I guess she had to do it till I came home and when I came home, my little girl didn't even come to me. She didn't remember me.

"I wasn't away very long, just long enough that she didn't know me. Then we were just in a one room cabin. Well, my husband built another room onto it and when he did I used to think it was a palace. Even so, when Mother came, he had to give up his bed. My Mother slept with me and he slept on the floor out in the kitchen. Even if we had someone come along, he never turned anyone away. An old Frenchman used to come along with his dogs and he always made him a bed out in the living room, kitchen, dining room (it was all one room).

"It all was very interesting."

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~~OK yes,~~ I had several illnesses, I don't know what I didn't have. I had to go to the hospital. I was going to go to Edmonton, but then there was a woman who took in patients, she was a very good nurse, so I went in when my baby was born, and after I had my baby I got this other illness. I got cold in my ovaries some how or other and was lying in a pool of inflammation. Then the doctor, she gave me what you call a peracment, (scraping out the womb) without much anesthetic. I was telling another firend about it (a nurse) and she said "that's the cruelest thing I've ever heard, you having that without any anesthetic". It wasn't exactly without any anesthetic, the nurse would hold the cone over my nose and she would keep saying to me "Are you alright". If I didn't answer she would take the cone away because she was scared. They didn't understand enough about anesthetic then, but anyway when I got better she told me "You'd better go away for six months holiday and get all built up again." So I did, I went to Bancouver and I -aatayed with my mother for three months, then I stayed with my husbands' mother for three months.

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~~"And somebody mentioned that you used to cook in the hospital"~~

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Hilda Hinkle - 7

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