

Life Story of William Findlay Parr, born August 6, 1869, dictated in 1935;

The following story was dictated to William's daughter, Sarah, a copy of which was supplied to me by granddaughter of William's, Dorothy Brown of Regina, Saskatchewan.

Only the spellings of the following were changed; nite to night, rite to right, alrite to alright, farther to further, stook to stoke, Coburg to Cobourg, McKilop & Michelop to McKillop, plough to plow, thro' to through, tho' to though, shantys to shanties, breeks to breachers, netty to pretty, mettle to metal, and several abbreviations are spelled out also. Corrections were made so that the article is not be full of "[sic]" making it more difficult to read.

Dear Ruth,

I understand you would like me to tell you what I can remember of my past life. The following is what I can remember and it is long and crooked.

Starting with some of the things handed down from my grandfather Parr [Joseph Parr whom married Jane Kennedy]--

When we moved from Cobourg to London, he had a two o.x. wagon, couple of cows, an axe, a plough and an old single barrel shot gun. The gun was to supply meat and clothing for a family of nine children. He made all their boots.

After he [Joseph Parr & Jane Kennedy] had located, he went to London and made his first payment on his farm, the sum of twenty-five cents. He then bought his supplies, tea and tobacco, leaving his twenty-five cents, so he bought whiskey with that. Whiskey at that time was cheap.

He then returned to his farm to build himself a shanty and to commence the business of making a living. He had to cut down a few trees to make room to build the shanty, which had to be standard size, 18' x 24', with one door and two windows, to be covered later with deer skin when the deer was caught.

The house furniture will not be hard to describe; it consisted of a wooden pail, a brass kettle, one cast mettle pot, a griddle iron, a frying pan, a few knives and forks, some iron spoons, a teapot, a bake kettle, a spade, a hoe, and some bedding. The rest was made on the spot, fire place and all.

It must be remembered that my grandfather was one of the better off farmers. A lot of them did not have oxen or wagon, and some did not have a shot gun. There was no relief in those days, but nobody ever froze or starved while there were any supplies in the district. Then there were no matches at that time, so if you let your fire out you sent to a neighbour and borrowed a coal.

The only means of transportation were the lakes and rivers, while in winter time it was oxen to Montreal. Although they were a rough lot, the spirit of God was among them. I forgot to mention a few chickens, a pair of geese and an old sow in the household furniture.

Their sugar was tapped from the maple trees. The first wheat flour was made by hollowing out a spot in top of a hardwood stump and pounding it with a stone, as described in your history. Later, there was a gristmill in London, a little better than one of our choppers. The old mill is still doing business, only they have replaced the old stones with a new roller system, but still use the old water wheel for power. I have sold wheat to the man that built that mill, he bought wheat in Wolseley in 1901.

Back in the fifties [1850's], if they saw a man with a white collar, he was either a preacher or a sheriff. Much healthier for the preacher. I could write away for six months on this kind of stuff. I will quit now and give you something else - A family of nine, ranging from twelve down to a new born babe. My father [Joseph Parr whom married Margaret Ann Bell] was fourth [fifth actually] in the family. He learned the framing trade and worked around London for a time, then drifted up to Mitchell, where he did quite a lot of barn building, a barn was 40 x 60 feet and 16 feet high. The frame timber was fairly stiff, sills 16 inches square, plates and posts and cross beams 12 inches. The girts and corner braces were 8 inches square but shorter lengths. There would be 150 or 200 pieces in the frame. The framer would go into the woods and cut all the timber square and frame it. And then boss the job of raising the frame, that took 100 men and 10 gallons of whiskey or more. Some job, but Joe Parr had lots of nerve, for he never killed man nor even had one hurt. Then he had to sheet it all and lay the floors, hang doors, shingle it, all for \$60. If

he worked like fury he could make one dollar per day. He quit that work, got married [January 15, 1866 in Wesleyan Methodist Church in Mitchell, Ontario] and moved to Petrolia just when the first oil was struck and started building wooden oil tanks. That did not last, the steel tank beat them out. He moved to Huron City, Michigan and worked as a carpenter around the saw mill for about two years. He then came back to Ontario, bought a farm, 37 1/2 acres [September 2, 1875, Joseph Parr bought "the north sixty acres of Lot number Nineteen in the fourteenth concession of the said Township of McKillop" for six hundred dollars, from William Bell, his father-in-law. Instrument #1099], a payment of 25 cents down, on the 14 concession of McKillop [Township], Huron county. Then he built himself a shanty and moved in. I was born there the sixth of August, 1869. They tell me I was born under a total eclipse of the sun.

Then he cleared a potato patch, built a few barns around the district just to get a little money to carry on. At the end of three years he had gathered together three or four cows and a team of horses and a full line of implements. A scythe, a cradle, a bob sleight, a wagon, a spade, a hoe and a wooden hand rake to rake hay and grain and two-tined forks, also a plow. Then he cleared about 10 or 15 acres.

Then we moved to a farm on boundary between McKillop and Grey County [the aforementioned farm is on the boundary of McKillop and Grey Townships]. There were houses all along the McKillop side, but on the Grey side was solid woods. For the farmers in Grey faced out on the first concession of Grey. I might mention the roads in Ontario are anywhere from 3/4 mile to 1 1/4 miles apart. This farm was 75 acres, and about half of it was woods. I must have been very small when we moved there, for we moved back to the 14th in the spring of '17 [maybe 1877?]. Yet I remember moving to the boundary and a lot of things that happened when we were there [January 15, 1877 "Joseph Parr of the Township of McKillop in the County of Huron Farmer and Margaret Ann Wife", sold the "North Sixty Acres of Lot Number Nineteen in the fourteenth Concession of the said Township of McKillop", for the Sum of Three thousand dollars, to William Bell. Instrument #1371. February 5, 1877, Joseph Parr of

McKillop Township, purchased "the West half of the North Half of Lot Seventeen in the Thirteenth Concession of the said Township of McKillop containing by admeasurement Thirty seven acres and one half of an acre of land" from Thomas Davidson. Instrument #1411] The house was logs, 10 rounds high with the ceiling of joists on top of the 8th log, leaving two logs the upstairs wall. It was 18 x 24 ft., finished off as follows - floors of wide hemlock boards, 1/2 inch apart and about half nailed down, and every time you stepped on them they rolled like a wagon on a corduroy road. Of course it served as a burglar alarm. Looking back, I don't think it necessary. Doors and window, side next the road, door in middle and window on each side and frames painted red. Door on back in middle with window on each side, but not painted. The upstairs windows were set in the gables close to the peak, not painted. All the windows were fitted with 7" x 9" glasses [sic], eighteen panes to a window. The stairs was a round ladder, Father found that was too hard on his feet. He put in one with flat treads. This was a standard house in those days.

The stable was rather nondescript, there was no barn when we moved in, we found the rats in full possession and sure showed us they owned the place. They would make a circuit of the house about every five minutes day and night, but came to an end when an old cat wandered in one day. She was of no particular breed, she was all legs, tail and head. Color - black, white & yellow. Did she multiply and prosper? I'll say she did, for the place was full of cats pretty soon, but no rats. I forgot to give you the ceremony of adoption of a stray cat into a new home. The cat is first caught into the best room in the house. Her paws well greased with fresh butter, then she is given all the fresh milk she can drink (fresh from the cow), then placed on a nice soft cushion and slipped under the stove. And when she comes out she is ready for action.

One day when Annie and I were playing at beheading people, she was pulling tangee [sic] (a week with a big head), and bringing it to the block and I was chopping off the heads. We got along all right, till I made a miss and cut off my finger. It just hung by the skin, that stopped the game. Mother placed the finger back in place and carried me over

to Pop Morrison's, he had an Ed-a-cation [sic], and was doctor, lawyer and general high priest. He rolled it in a nice clean rag, then covered it all over with green sealing wax. I don't know why he used the wax, it might have been a mark of his official position. That don't matter, I have still got the finger and it has always worked good. Annie and I [got] a kick out of playing doctor and nurse. We used the cats for patients (poor cats). We had lots of them. We gave them catnip and tangee, led salt and salt and water. We must have cured them, for we hardly ever could catch the same cat twice. The rest of our play time was much in the ordinary way of a boy and a girl. Our three [two] brothers died while infants [Joseph H. Parr died July 8, 1874 at the age of 5 months, 16 days, & Joseph A. died August 4, 1875 at the age of 2 months, 17 days]. The only work I can remember was when they were drawing in the hay and sheaves. Annie had to rake the scattered straws behind the wagon, so there was not much left for widows and fatherless. My job was to herd the gap while this stacking business was going on. A gap is where you let down the fence to serve as a gate, which was usually between the pasture and the grain fields. The last time I herded the gap they worked pretty late, I lay down and went to sleep. When I woke it was pitch dark and everybody gone, so I stated for the house. I was in rather bad temper when I got there and Father asked me if I had closed the gap. That did it, and I expressed my feelings in no uncertain terms. They all laughed then. I was mad.

Now I tell you something about the close neighbours, I will go east first - Widow Campbell was first, a good woman in most of [sic] ways, but a real terror to the countryside when she went on the rampage, which was altogether too often. She kept a big bunch of cattle, but not a very good fence. It was great fun to watch Joe Parr running after her cattle to get them out of his field. That sport was short-lived for Grandad [sic] Bell came over one day and had a kind of a nondescript dog that weighed about 140 pounds. Mother grabbed the dog, she thought he would keep tramps out. Tramps were pretty thick and he did. When he saw one coming he would go and meet him and walk along close to the fence on the inside, until he had him well past

the house. He never talked much, but did not look good to a tramp (and wasn't good). That dog could do something else, he could catch a four year old steer by the nose and make him turn a somersault and land fair on his back so quick he would not know what happened. That dog could do it every time he was told, and Dad sure told him. It didn't take the widow long to fix her fence and keep her cattle at home when she found she had that dog for a neighbour. Also the Widow Campbell's farm was 75 acres with a woods. He could also churn on a dog churn - (Annie)[?].

The next neighbour was a big Irishman, named John Cook. He had 37 1/2 acres with some woods. This man Cook thought a lot of Mother's dog, but the dog didn't think much of him, for he would not let Cook cross the fence until someone came out and said he could. This man's mother-in-law lived with him, her name was Katie, his wife was Katie and the little girl's name was Katie. This man used to visit us about twice a week, sometimes he brought the three Katies, sometimes alone, but always stayed until 3 or 4 a.m. When the Katies came, Mother had to stay up and visit. When John came alone she could go to bed because he didn't like the dang [sic] women listening to what men were talking about. When the Cooks came, there was always plenty of talk going on. The two old Katies would complain about John for not fetching home a bottle once in awhile. But he was so dang [sic] mean he would not buy a drop. Then John would stop his story of how many Scotch or Irish Catholics he had cleaned up on, whichever one he happened to be going after at the time (it was all he ever talked about), to growl that all these danged [sic] women ever thought of was whiskey. That made a break in the monotony.

One day little Katie got sick and John went for the doctor and brought him out. He found Katie playing with the cat. He looked her over, gave her some powders and told them she would be all right and went away home. Next morning, John was back for the doctor. The doctor was more inquisitive this time, he asked how she looked, if she was pale, John told him she was very pale. Then he asked if she had a fever, John's answer was - that she was very fever. The doctor then asked what she ate for break-

fast. And was told she ate nothing, just her mush, two pieces of toast, [and] a slice of meat. The doctor gave him a perscription and sent him to a drug store and thought he had him all fixed up. But behold, about eight o'clock that night John came tearing into our place with eyes bulging, to get Father to go after the doctor. Father knew nothing of what had happened, hitched up and plunged his horses through two feet of snow in a blinding storm. When he got the doctor out of bed, he got swore at and the foregoing story. The doctor refused to go, but after arguing awhile he asked, "Will he pay me?" Father assured him he would. The doctor hitched and came, the trip was about eighteen miles. You would not think it possible for this man Cook to have any sympathy for anything. He was the ugliest looking man I ever saw.

The next neighbour was a big Scotchman, McCullam, he had a 37 1/2 acre farm. They used to come over once in awhile and Jim would tell how he would get another \$100.00 to lend at 10% and how he made Ann, his wife, put both feet on the new sewing machine. Ann would say nothing. just listened. They had five children, and all sat around just where they were placed and sucked their thumbs, just to show their good manners. There were four or five families between McCullam's and the swamp. They spent summer peeling tan bark and making whoops [whips?]. Tan bark is for tanning leather. It was ground up and shipped to the old country. In the fall they cut stay-bolts, cord-wood and saw logs. When snow came they would draw all this stuff to Seaforth, about fifteen miles. They used to pass our place before daylight and went home away after dark. It took about all the money they got to buy horses and harness. They threw in their work so as old Coleman could sell salt for 60 cents a barrel. The hops and stay-bolts were to make salt barrels and the cord-wood to boil the brine.

Now we go west - There was two neighbours between us and the little village of Walton. They were more aristocratic, had a little more money but very good neighbours. They had abandoned their standard house for a lumber one and built standard barns. Father built the barns. In those days if a man didn't have a house he didn't rent one. He just went along until he found a place that suited him, then

got a few logs and built a shanty. Sometimes he covered it with bark, sometimes with troughs. These troughs were usually made of basswood logs about 10 inches through, split through the middle and hollowed out and cut long enough to reach from the front wall to the back. The front wall is one log higher than the back, that gives the slope to the roof. The first tier of these troughs is placed close together, hollow side up, and second tier is hollow side down on the joint. This makes a dry roof. There was no standard size for these shanties. These were always built on the side of the road. There was one of these shanties on the road in front of each of the modern homes just described.

This brings us up to the spring of 1877, we sold our farm in the fall of 1876. In Mar. '77 [1877] we moved back to the 14th con. where we had bought a farm with a standard house and a pump at the front door. There was a log stable with a clapboard roof, they are three foot shingles. The school was about a mile and three-quarters east. The school was a good size, one room, one teacher and that was plenty of the kind. The school was built of cedar logs, ten logs high, three small windows on either side, a door in one end and a hemlock floor. The rafters were the ceiling, that helped out on air space. In the summer time there were from 75 to 100 pupils and 135 to 150 pupils in winter.

I will describe the furnishings before I give the rule of procedure.

Desks running along both sides and on back with a bench to sit on. These were for the larger children of 18 years and up. They could sit and face the desk or turn their backs to it, whichever they liked. These desks were about three feet high. The centre of the floor was fitted with modern double seats, I don't know how many, but a lot. The blackboard [was] about 2 1/2 feet x 6 feet, placed well up on the front wall just behind the teacher's desk. The teacher's desk was up on a platform two feet high, the desk itself was 1 1/2 feet x 2 feet set on long legs, the top of it was at an angle of 45 degrees, with a two inch ledge for the stone ink bottle. The teacher's chair was a high stool. I very near forgot to heat this school. We had a box stove, it would hold about as much wood as a 45 gallon barrel, only it was square. This was placed just in front of the teacher's desk, he had to be kept warm.

When the teacher arrived in the morning he armed himself with all the rules and regulations pertaining to school teaching, which consisted of one ironwood gad [sic] two feet long and three-quarters of an inch at the butt to one-quarter at the point. This served to point out work on the board (that never wore the point off), and also to point out the road to success and demonstrate the physical force it required to attain that goal. The teacher so armed would climb onto his stool and wrap his legs around either front legs and tuck his toes behind the rungs. He was then all set until recess, if he did not have to get down to apply the rules, something he did not do if it could be set over till after four, when he would be down anyway. He would pound on the desk for order, and begin work by calling them up in columns. The smallest of us had to toe a mark drawn across the floor. This was to give them the once over and a new lesson and send them to their seats. He just repeated the classes until he got over them all. Our reading lessons, we got two or three paragraphs, and each one read it in turn. After it had been read a few times we could recite quite nicely. For me, I never learned to read. Then he would give us a few words to spell, and if we could not spell them we would hear someone else spell them that was just as good. This man was a good teacher and was paid extra good money. Also had a good contract - three years for nine hundred dollars, or twenty-five dollars per month. He was a Scotchman and the pupils were about half Scotch and the other half Irish. The Scotch had the best of it, or we at least thought so. We changed our teacher at Christmas time, then I know we had the best of it. We moved away in the spring and was not there to see his finish, but I heard all about it. There was a girl named Georgina Duffield going to school. She was a little thick in the head so he undertook to brighten her up a little by the only rule that had ever been in that school. When he was applying it pretty vigorously a long, sleepy Irishman that everybody thought he was the last word in a joke, he stood up, told him to leave off and was promptly told that if he didn't like the way he was doing things he would go down and give him some. But he did not need to go, Tom was coming, and when they met Tom never stopped but carried the teacher and threw him out and all his belongings after him,

dismissed the school, locked the door and carried the key to Billy Bell, Chairman of the School Board. (Billy Bell was my grandfather). It wasn't a day's [sic] school if there was not one fight or more, for which the teacher never forgot to apply the wooden rule of mercy according to their nationality.

If we could not have a fight on the way to school, we would have to have two or more on the way home. And if someone of the girls decided the fight unequal they would enter the sport, using their dinner bags for batons. This was not such a good weapon in the morning as at night because in the morning it contained their dinner. That made some cushion, but the dinner did not need chewing after it had gone through a fight. At night there would only be a book or two and stone ink bottle, that make a real weapon. The dinner bag was made of wincy [sic] cloth, something like denim. It would be about 9" x 12" with a draw strong [string] around the mouth. There was no nice dinner pails or paper trimmed baskets in our school, everything was standard.

I will try to describe some of the near neighbours - going east.

Our first was a very dignified Irishman. We got on well with him, as we did with everybody else, but he was not very well liked. He would not drink, and besides, he was a Liberal and that was a crime. Next was an Italian, rather a strange man. He died shortly after we moved to that place. For a week before he died the only man that would stay in the house with him was Billy Bell and Joe Parr because he could see the devil sitting in the corner waiting for him. He would beg them to not bury him, to just lay him beside Ab Kavanaugh's line fence so he could stink him out. (Hipo's [sic] were not known there).

On the other side of the road was an uncle of mine and an old Irishman of the old school, he was just a little odd.

Going west - first was an Irishman, Tom Gainsforth, your Uncle Guy's grandfather. He was a little cranky, one day he went out to plow and the oxen bolted and ran across the field corner wise. But old Tom got hold of the plow and plow a furrow, then he turned and came back, called it strike out and plowed his field to it. He had plow the field round and round like a Frenchman the year before,

so it was alright, the damn thing needed to be cross plow anyway.

The next was Tom Denis, and just across the road from him was Billy Bell, they were both good church deacons. Each had three bright boys that could drink as much whiskey as their dads, or maybe more. The two old men would go to church on Sunday morning; when they came home they held conference (a community of two) and turn over a new leaf for the boys. But by the next Sunday it was worse than the week before, if that was possible. So it would have to be all done over again.

The next was an Irishman, Tom Burns, he used to go around the country side gathering ashes. He always traded soap for them, he made potash out of the ashes and sold it to the chemist's to make baking soda. Tom always got a cup of tea and told the people's fortune at every house he stopped. The only time he ever celebrated was July 12th, a grand occasion. Tom played the fife. On the morning of the 12th he would send one of his eleven sons over to Gainsforth's to borrow a comb. They did not have one of their own, as they did not need one as the 12th only came once a year. Tom's hair hung in long ringlets down below his shoulders, Lizzie's hair was rather straight and stood on end. After they got their hair smoothed out nice, they would don their 12th of July clothes. Lizzie her red dress and Tom his orange coat, red breechers and red cap, with his fife under his arm. They were ready to mount, Lizzie the old black horse and Tom the old grey (William 3rd rode a grey horse), and they were away to the 12th. They never took any of the twelve [sic] sons along because they didn't have many clothes. Lizzie always made their clothes by taking two yards of red flannel, double it in the middle, cut a hole for the head to go through, stitch it under the arms and they had a full dress.

Then comes Jim Wilsey, and Englishman, with a couple of accomplishments to his credit. One was the champion liar of the township, if not the county or maybe the province. The other was when he was at a threshing, if he could catch a mouse or a rat he would bite the head off just to give the boys a thrill. You will notice this is a more civilized district than the one we left, at least it was counted so.

I forgot to dress the pupils of the McKillop School, they were all dressed in homemade flannel, striped, check or red, white or black. The waist was tight and came well up around the neck and just came to the waist line [sic]. The skirt was a good size, with a draw string around the top so it could be adjusted to any size. They were always made with tucks so as to let down when they stuck their legs down too far [sic]. They always had some trouble in keeping the bottom of the bodice and top of the skirt at the right place. They were inclined to part company. The girl wore big hoods, tied under the chin, for hats made of flannel and sun bonnets for summer.

The boys wore grey or blue pants and smock of a check shirt and long legged boots with copper toes and hung their pants on with one brace. The legs of their pants were tucked inside of their boots. The girls wore pretty little boots of about a pound and a half each when they were very neat, and big Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like on of these.

The boys' caps were made like sauce pans, with dog ears to cover their ears, also tied down. In summer straw hats were worn, I am not good at making a list of full dress suits.

February, 1878, we moved to Michigan. Father drove over with a team and wagon. It was 120 miles, a long way in that country. Mother waited a few days, there was plenty of excitement amongst we children for Aunt Jane was going along and she had six children, so three of us made quite a party. All going to have our first ride on the cars. The time came and we all piled into a bob sleigh and driven to Seaforth, where we boarded a train that took us to Stratford (first leg of the journey), where we had to wait about six hours. We then got another train that took us to Sarnia; by that time had become real travellers. But the river was frozen so the ferry could not cross. The railroad men undertook to take passengers across on the ice. They laid planks on the ice to walk on and pile [sic] the children in to sleighs and draw them across. But Mother balked. She carried Nellie, making Annie and I walk. [Nellie was born July 16, 1876 in McKillop Township, Ontario. Registered "Jane Ellen.," #010810 No.12 for Huron District] The people seemed to think her foolish,

she did not look a bit foolish when we were about midstream, for one of the sleighs broke through. If it had not been for lots of planks handy and handled quick and careful the whole load would have been in the bottom of the St. Claire. (This is the river where the Mormon preacher let the old woman slip into the river thro' [sic] the ice and said, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, pass me along another.") Everybody walked the rest of the way.

Father was in Port Huron to meet us when we crossed. He piled us into another train, which took us to Emily City [Imlay City]. Uncle Willie met us with a team and wagon and took us to our new home. There was a very frame house and barn on the place, with a well at the back door. Also a good orchard, peaches, pears, plums and apples. Uncle had taken Aunt Jane and the family to their new home, two miles further on. Annie and I started to explore the place, we had lots of time as there was only a few days of winter school left, so we did not start. Father said he wanted to get some pigs (and he got them); the next day Sam Ingram drove into the yard two old sows in the wagon. They stood about 3 1/2 feet high and about as thick as a lath. Their heads were longer than their tails and body together. In due time our pigs increased, one had four and the other eleven. They were turned out in a little swamp where there was lots of room, water and pasture. There was a lane up to the barn, that let them come up to get feed. Everything was well fenced, but that did not make any difference, when they wanted to explore the corner of the potato field, they would walk up to the fence, shove in their friz-nose [sic] and take out a few loads of earth, then walked under the fence. When we came to chase them out, the two old ones would make a dive for the hole, if they hit it, it was alright, and if they missed alright, they just shoved their friz-nose [sic] under the fence and carried everything with them. It was not so easy for the little ones. They very seldom could find the hole or the place where the old ones went out, so they had to be run down one at a time and thrown over the fence. They were the pure razor back kind, and must have originated from the German woods (wild boar).

Your Uncle John was born there [John Parr born February 23, 1878, Imlay City, Michigan, USA]. Annie and I started to school when it started

on April 1st. There was no rule. For that term, we had a lady teacher, a timid little thing. Our school term was three months in summer, from April 1st to July 1st. In winter four months, from November 1st to March 1st, and changed teachers every term, a woman in summer and man in winter. The school was constructed pretty much under wooden rule, only you could learn something if you liked or you didn't need to. So long as you didn't make a noise, our teachers didn't like to be disturbed in their dreams or their novels. We had one teacher, when he wanted order he would hold up a pin in his hand and pound on the desk with the rule and growl, "Now so I can hear this pin drop," and after a minute or two if things didn't quiet down he would roar out, "I could not hear a crowbar fall." This school was small, they could only crowd in 100 pupils. Unlike the Ontario school it was frame, with a good floor and ceiling. Lots of blackboard, plenty of chalk and permission to use it. The teacher's platform was only one foot high, his desk two and one half feet high and he used a heavy barroom chair and two kitchen chairs for visitors. Our heating system was also good, a big box stove on each side of the teacher. Our desks were homemade, very well done, same style as our modern double seat. We had a few maps, one large one or USA. This school boasted of a porch over the door, it was an old school then. But it is still in use without any change. This school is in the little village of Black's Corners. There was nothing of any importance ever happened, unless an odd fight. It was supposed to be the roughest school in the state, it seemed tame to me.

In 1881, Father sold his farm to a man by the name of Blackburn, they had a quarrel over the settlement. There wasn't any of the gang big enough to lick Dad, so they hired a boy to lick me. He was not any bigger than me, but he was seventeen years old. We fought pretty well to a draw, he was willing to quit. I don't know whether he got his pay, but I had him pretty well pounded. I was only twelve years old at the time. If he had got hold of me I would have been out of it, but that is where I made his face look like a chopping block, was when he tried that. I was not pounded up much, but was very tired. This happened on the main corner of the village. There must have been 20 men and all the school looking

on. But no one dared to make a move, that would have meant a free for all. The crowd was pretty well divided.

The costumes were a little different to the Ontario ones. The boys wore cottonade [sic], the girls print or gingham. The boots were lighter and of lace variety, when they had them. The head gear, anything from a dog-eared cap to an English derby. The girls, anything from a sun bonnet to a flower garden.

Now for our neighbours - next to us was an old Irishman, he was rather cranky and very stingy. He had one son, Jean, a husky lad of about twenty-five. The only thing I ever knew Jean to do was to pull poles in the hop yard in the fall. A hop yard is a field planted to hops, this one had nine acres in it. The hop roots are planted four feet apart each way. The poles are 16 feet by 3 ins. They are set in the ground, one beside each root, the same as a fence post. If the crop was good the hops grow to the top of the poles and hang in great branches all the way up. It was Jean's job to cut the vine off at the ground, pull the pole down and carry them to a box where there was four girls picking. Jean had two boxes and eight girls to look after. Each box held 28 bushels. The box was divided into four, each girl having her own quarter, seven bus. [sic], and if she worked hard she could get it full in the day, for which she got 25 cents. Imagine poor Jean with such a mob. There were four of these gangs, 32 girls and four men. In winter time Jean used to catch skunk, he used to pay \$1.00 for skunk dens, always could smell him before you could see him.

Back to the old man again, he had a big orchard and lots of grapes. We boys would walk half a mile to steal his apples and grapes, when we had far better ones rotting on the ground at home. We never froze [stole] his peaches because they were frost peaches and hard as rock.

The man that owned the hop yard would start out the second Monday in September to gather up his hop pickers, 32 of them. He could get them alright, but to get help to work in the kitchen was another question. No matter how much money he offered he often had to go into the kitchen himself for that mob had to be fed. They had two hours every night and four hours on Saturday night in the hop

house. And on the last night he would rent a hall and have a dance and banquet. That was his drawing card to get his pickers.

We had another neighbour, named Roy, he had two boys, Ed and Charlie. Ed and I were the same age, Charlie four years older. Ed and I ran wild in the holidays, we did everything from running rabbits to blasting a pine stump with gun powder. One day when we had a heavy shot into a six foot stump and lit the fuse, it was burning rather slow when Charlie came along. He thought the fuse had gone out. Although we told him to wait, he went up to see and he saw alright, for just as he got up close the charge went off and blew a bird's nest, that is to say, it blew the packing out of the hole, but didn't split the stump. It was just as well it did blow a bird's nest, for Charlie was right beside it, his clothes were burnt a bit but his face was filled with black powder. He was black as a 'niger'; his hair, eyebrows, eyelashes were all burnt off, but his eyes escaped. That settled for Charlie.

When Ed and I were experimenting he stayed away. The first money I earned was with this man Roy.

Another lad, Frank Odell, and I wanted skates, so we got a job from Mrs. Roy, cutting wood at 50 cents per cord. We cut enough to pay for skates, then we went skating and forgot about wood.

The next fall he hired me again to pick potatoes along with Ed. He gave me 50 cents per day, I earned \$1.50, and was I rich.

When first we moved to Michigan there was an old spiritualist, by name of Bently, living right across the road. He died just after we came, but he was supposed to come back and walk around in the garden every night. Then Uncle Jerry Ingram (Will Ingram's father), came over to Michigan and rented the Bently house and moved in. When they heard the stories about old Bently's walking around the garden every night, Aunt Sarah said she didn't mind, she could lick Bently dead or alive. But Uncle Jerry was scared green, he said Sarah was such a darn fool she was not afraid of anything. He got into bed behind Sarah so she would meet Bently first. He made his sojourn short in that house.

The next year an old Irishman, Cock Robin McLaughin, bought the Bently place, but he was like Aunt Sarah, not afraid of him. So he went ahead

to clean the place up, he bought ten gallons of whiskey, called in a few of his neighbours, about 30 to help him. When he got things under way, Cock Robin got himself a milk pail and a dipper and started to pass the whiskey around and the work went on.

I went to a Free Methodist camp meeting out in the woods, it was like going to a picnic. I fell in with a couple of school chums, the preacher's sons; we were having a pretty good time when all at once our school teacher jumped to her feet started tearing up and down the speaker's platform. I don't know whether she was preaching or praying, anyway she tore up and down until she fell unconscious. Then the preachers and elders gathered around her and prayed and gave thanks that their beloved sister had received the power of God. As they were carrying her away on a stretcher, one of my pals, the preacher's son, said, "If he had a pail of cold water he could bring the old devil around." This old school teacher that took the power went to town with her husband once, and he went home and forgot her. He remembered when he went back alright, because he met her on the road.

It was the second Monday of September 1881, that the big Michigan fire broke out. It cleaned out nearly all the pine timber on the southern peninsula. I don't know how many people were burned to death. But it ran away into the hundreds. There were whole families burnt until there were few bones left, not enough to fill an apple box. And some not burned at all, just suffocated with heat and smoke. About the only ones that got away were the ones that got into the corn fields or the river. The corn was the only green thing unless the pines, and they burned like oil. The pines were 100 feet high and the fire ran right to the tops of them. After the fire there were lots of places that looked like prairie. Other places there were a few stumps left, but the roots were still there. The most pitiful thing I heard of was of the mail driver between Marlet [Marlette] and Caro. He was coming from Caro to Marlet, about twenty miles, when he was trapped by the fire. He had unhitched the horse from the buggy and tied the mail bag on the horse's neck. We don't know whether the horse got away or he let it go. The horses came through to Marlet with part of mail bag still on his neck and the skin all burnt off him.

They found the driver a few yards from the irons of the buggy in the edge of a corn field, burnt but very little.

Uncle McGinis and Aunt Matty, Father and Mother were up at North Branch visiting Grandad [sic] Bell, twenty miles north west of where we lived when the fire started. They started for home, they had Uncle McGinis' team and wagon, the fire closed in on them at Kitridgeville, half way home. Just a small tongue of fire, about four rods wide, crossed the road in front of them. They threw the quilts over the women's heads and put the horses through the fire on the run. When they got clear and looked back, the little village saw mill were all in flames. Uncle Mac [Malcolm Findlay Bell] and Father had long beards, but when they got through the fire they had a clean shave. The manes and tails were gone off the horses. Aunt Matty started to complain about Uncle Mac's beard. Uncle said, "Damn the beard, look at my horses."

Grandad did not lose anything because of the wind, it had to back in on them. Ingram's were just on the edge of the pines, they saved their stuff, but had to fight for it. There was an empty house across the road from them, the fire taking just the door step off and burnt a house on either side of it. Where people were fighting it there were lots of freaks of that kind, I saw that one.

About nine miles was the closest the fire came to us. It was pretty smoky, but not near as bad as in Ontario. The wind carried it across Lake Huron, by the time it got across it had settled down and got thicker, causing them to light lamps at 3 p.m., and smelled the smoke. Everybody thought the end of time was upon them.

The next spring we started for Manitoba. Mother and we four children boarded a train at Emily City [Imlay City]. Father had gone a month before. We jingled along until we came to Chicago, where we were transferred to a bus drawn by four horses, which lurched and jumped over what looked like a mud road for about three miles. It was raining, making a nice dirty night.

We were then put on another train and landed in St. Paul next morning at 8 a.m. We had to wait twelve hours, that gave us time to explore the station, the biggest and best idea on the continent at that time.

John went off on his own for a little way, and found an old 'nigger' porter with white wool. He came back on the run, yelling to Nellie and another little girl that was there, "I saw the black man." Of course they were interested right away, and wanted to know where. He grabbed hold of the two girls and started back, yelling, "I'll show you." When he got back he pointed to him and yelled, "There he is, that is the black man." John was sure he had found the devil. It was about 20 degrees below and a lot of snow that day in St. Paul, the most winter I had ever seen. We were all tired when 8 p.m. came around, so we crawled into another train and went to sleep. We woke up some place about Barnsville. All we could see from the train was snow, an odd bunch of ponies and once in awhile a sod shack. We reached Emerson late in the afternoon, and all scrambled out on the platform, a Customs officer roared at them to open our baggage. You would think he was going to take each piece out and shake it. When he came back he asked Father what was in the trunks. Father said, "clothes," so he just pulled the lids down and chalked marked them. He could have seen them just as well with the lids down. We were then hustled into a train and started for Winnipeg. Got there about nine or ten o'clock, unloaded then found shelter in a place that was called a hotel. The only thing I say about it that looked like a hotel was that they sold whiskey. But that was a Winnipeg hotel in 1882; we had our dinner there.

That day we checked and went to the station, got aboard another train to make the last leg of our journey to Portage la Prairie. We went to a house Father had rented, got a fire started and gathered snow and melted it so Mother could get supper. She had tea, bread, butter, sugar, meat and corn, all frozen solid but tea and sugar. We got things softened up a little after awhile, then we sat around the table and filled up. We had a little trouble getting beds fixed up, but made it. We had all our bedding and clothes with us and bought a stove and all furniture that went with it, consisting of one cast metal, tea kettle, one cast metal fry pan, one cast metal griddle, two cast metal pots, one tin tea pot, two pie plates, two square bread pans and one dipper. It took all that to make a stove, you could not buy less. That was all we had to keep house until our furniture came. It

had been shipped by freight, and didn't get it until the last of August.

Uncle Jim and Aunt Jane Balfour and young Jim came in from MacDonald on March 3rd. It was snowing hard when they came. We had dinner and by that time the wind started and one couldn't see across the street. The snow was soft at first but the old snow was drifted hard. You could drive a team over it anywhere. And when that started to move it was like a storm of splintered glass. There was two trains and snow plow in C.P.R. Yards when the storm started and were there when it quit on March 6th. There was lots of wood in the yard, so they melted snow and kept the engines alive. One thing helped them out was the snow was handy. It covered the telegraph, and the station almost covered. But in the about 10 days the C.P.R. had things going again. It had to be done with shovels, because the snow plow of that day was but little better than a pilot plow of today. The town did not move much snow, they didn't have to because you could drive over it just as you liked, because the town was scattered. (That storm has gone down in history because it was the worst I ever saw) There was not much hotel accommodation in Portage or any other town. If you got the chance to lie on the floor for a dollar, you paid your dollar and curled up to sleep.

The Balfours stayed with us until the storm was over, it kept us busy to keep warm burning wood in a cook stove. That was our heating plant, the house was small, 16 x 20. We never went upstairs because it was all open. Just one ply of lumber, we paid \$20 per month, that looked cheap. About the last of the month the landlady called to collect the next month's rent and to serve notice for us to move out before the first of May. That meant we had to find another place to live. Father looked around for a time, but found he couldn't get a house at any price within his means. He tried to buy a tent but found the price prohibitive. He decided to make his own tent, but in the meantime Uncle Bob and Uncle Mac Bell had arrived, and their family was following and would need a place to live. Also Jack and Dave Bell were there and needed a tent, so they went together and bought enough canvas and linen thread to make two big ones and one small one for Jack and Dave. The canvas was brought home and the 5 men started