

The J. Leonard and Edna Murray Story submitted by James Murray

In June of 1920, my parents Edna and J. Leonard Murray, my grandparents Catherine and William and two bachelor uncles, William C. (Bill) and John E. (Jack) left their homes at Elgin, Manitoba and headed for their homesteads on Sec. 36-27-14W. They came by train to Makinak, then drove to Magnet to find they had to cut a road the last five or six miles. The country was all bush and swamp and they had to wait for sloughs to dry up so they could haul in their supplies. They still had all the logs to cut, house and barns to build before winter, and also hay to make. So they must have had some anxious moments.



Catherine and William Murray, summer of 1927.

They all had come from Ontario originally, Grandfather was a cheesemaker. Dad and my uncles worked in a stove foundry in Harriston. Mother trained in the Royal Victoria Hospital at Barrie and was a registered nurse. She was a very popular person as a midwife, as hospitals and doctors were an unheard of luxury on the Prynes Lake swamp. The men had grain farmed on rented land in Southern Manitoba, so I suppose the chance for free land was a strong pull. (It must have been to put up with that isolation after coming from Industrial Ontario.)

The railroad arrived in Magnet in 1924, so for four years supplies were bought in from Ste Rose. They left early in the morning, stayed overnight and came home the next day.

They had a few cows and they tried to get some land opened up. They trapped fur bearing animals. Moose and elk were plentiful and helped fill the



Bernice (Dellman) Garth, Keith, Russel, and Edna (Roberts), Mother and Dad, Edith and Jim Murray.

larder. They did as much for themselves as possible. They were their own blacksmiths, carpenters, butchers and veterinarians. The women made soap, preserved wild fruit, sewed their own clothes and knit mitts and socks. They made quilts and nothing was wasted — when something was worn out it soon became a mat.

Each fall the men, except for Grandpa, went back to Southern Manitoba to thresh on the steam outfits. It was one of these times when Mrs. Darragh from Magnet was lost for a week. She came to a neighbour, and Mother nursed her and cared for her until she could be taken home. Meanwhile, Grandpa drove out to tell the searchers where she was.

Bill and Dad both played the violin (Fiddle) and travelled many a mile to play for dances and to perform in concerts, which were quite popular then. They said they hardly made enough to pay for new bows and strings. A far cry from today when they get a \$100.00 plus.

An ice-house was standard equipment in those days, before Manitoba Hydro came along. Ice was cut in Prynes Lake and packed in sawdust. This was how cream (one cash crop) was kept cool and fresh. They even packed it in ice for the trip to the train. The twelve mile trip through heavy poplar bush was rough and wet. Winter travel was a blessing in some ways — much smoother. Everyone had a footwarmer or heated bricks in the oven. Not many used cabooses, usually a two deck wagon box or cutter.

I don't remember too much about our six year stay at Prynes Lake. We left in 1927, when I was old enough to go to school. We all lived in the same yard