

DELLA'S STORY July 1988

Both of my Grandfather's came to Canada from Dublin, Ireland. Both were farmers in the old country.

THOMAS ARMSTRONG: Grandpa Armstrong's wife died in Ontario, (probably in Parry Sound). Thomas and his wife had the following family:

Samuel
Henry
John
Ettie
Annie
Jenny
Robert
Matilda

Grandpa Armstrong farmed in the Parry Sound district of Ontario, and my mother, Matilda was born there. Grandpa Armstrong travelled with us to Saskatchewan in 1904. From Saskatchewan he struck out to New Norway, Alberta where he "proved-up" his homestead. Grandpa Armstrong was a stern man and did not have as much patience with children as did Grandpa Bierness. Before he died, he returned from New Norway to stay with us at Asquith on the farm. Shortly thereafter he died and is buried at Asquith.

GRANDPA THOMAS BIERNESS:

He also sailed from Dublin, Ireland. They were on the sailing vessel for approx. six weeks until they landed at Halifax. There was a rumor that one of the relatives died on the boat during the voyage. He eventually settled in Muskoka County, Ontario near the village of Rosseau. Many of their records could be obtained from the Methodist Church they attended at Hekla. His wife was Welsh/English and their children were:

Frank
Samuel
Thomas
Robert
Will
Joseph
John (My Father)

Grandpa Bierness was especially loved by his grandchildren. He came west with us (Grandpa Armstrong too) in 1904 and after leaving us in Osler with Uncle Joe and Aunt Emmy, he found a homestead near Ruthilda, Saskatchewan. He had a great respect for the Indians in his area. They would occasionally use his yard as a stopping off place on their journeys. The Indians taught him many of their medicinal cures using herbs etc. He was said to have healed polio victims in this way. Grandpa Bierness was a great story teller and loved to scare us kids with his ghost stories. The homesteads were all cleared by horse and plow, and

this heavy work took it's toll on many of the early settlers; Grandpa Bierness died of a heart attack at Ruthilda and was buried at Asquith Cemetary.

JOHN BIERNESS:

My father was born in Guelph, Ontario. When he was a young man, he worked as a lumberman, cutting down trees. He used to walk some 8 miles to see Matilda Armstrong while they were courting. Dad was married twice; his first wife and child died in childbirth. He and his second wife (Matilda) had the following children:

Thomas
Dolly (Sarah Elizabeth)
James
Della
Harland
Clinton (Dick)
Neeta
Wilfred
Cecil
Ada
Velma

Ada and Velma were the only two born in Saskatchewan. In 1904 we all headed west with our two Grandfathers; Armstrong and Bierness. I was only 9 years old at the time. We came by train. We brought all our belongings, including a colt, 2 cows and a heifer; all the way from Muskoka Ontario! The train tracks had been flooded out at Lumsden and we had to cross the Quepelle Vally by barge, taking all our belongings with us and loading up again on a waiting train on the other side. The same procedure was repeated at Saskatoon. We continued by train to Osler. The train crews had run out of coal and were burning straw in the engine. It was a very slow journey ! We stayed then at Uncle Joe's and Aunt Emmy's in Osler until father found a homestead at Juniata, Saskatchewan, near Asquith. While we stayed on the homestead dad occasionally worked for John Caswell near Saskatoon tending stock. Aunt Emmy was a Caswell. Mother was a great provider and we were never hungry or cold. We were Methodist and had church services at the school in Juniata. The services were conducted by ministers of various denominations. (Some were student ministers from Saskatoon) During th 30's the homestead was reposeded. Shortly thereafter, he moved into the village of Asquith and lived there on his pension. My brother, Harland and his wife had come to Victoria in the late 1930's. Mother and Father came out to the Island in the early 1940's. In 1945, at Matilda's coaxing, they returned to Saskatoon. A preacher had warned them that an invasion to the Island was coming and all the old people would be taken away. Father vowed that he would die if he returned to Saskatchen. Two days after he arrived in Saskatoon he died. I stayed with my mother until she died and then returned to

Victoria.

NEETA BIERNESS:

My sister was born in Ontario. She was full of life. In her teens, she had a very serious accident while riding a horse. The horse stumbled, fell and rolled over Neeta. She could have been killed.

She worked in the telephone office in Saskatoon. She met Earl one night while each of them was with someone else. She liked Earl right off and soon they were dating. Neete was very "sporty".

When she was pregnant with Clayton, she went to the farm at Juniata to be with her mother while her first child was born. Neeta and Velda came to Victoria in the summer of 1943. Ron and Lorraine came in July of 1944. Dolly and Herbert had come in the early 40's and Harland and Amy had come in the late 30's.

MILITARY MEN:

The Bierness family was heavily involved in the "Great War". My brothers James, Harland and Clinton (Dick), and my Uncle Henry Armstrong, all served in the 96th Battalion of Saskatoon. Clinton was a stretcher bearer and saw a lot of the horrors of war. They were all at Vimy Ridge. My husband, Wilbur McFadden was also a member of the 96th Battalion.

Questions arising out of Della's statement:

- 1) Thomas Armstrong: A] What was his wife's name?
B] Where is his wife buried?
C] Did any of his children come west with him?
D] What was the cause of his death?
E] Where is he buried? (I could not find his gravestone at Asquith Cemetary)
F] Was the Albert Bierness at Ruthilda related to you?
- 2) Thomas Bierness: A] What was the cause of his death?
B] Did the family settle in the maritimes prior to moving to Ontario?
C] What was his wife's name? How did she die? Where is she buried?
- 3) John Bierness: A] What was the name of his first wife? What was the name of the baby? Where are they buried?
B] Why did the family come west?
C] What was the family connection with Sweetwater Saskatchewan?
D] There was a Bierness family in Juniata prior to your family settling there. Were they related?

1. John Gordon Beirnes:
Aunt Della says he was called Gordon. He was Uncle Joe's son. He was Albert's cousin.
2. Ed Beirnes:
Ed was Albert's brother. Yes, Aunt Della does remember the hailstorm of 1910. There were dents in the side of the homestead. Anyone who had westerly windows had them broken. Yes, she does remember the Beirnes boys caught in the storm. They were the brothers of Cele and Ethel. She believes they were Wilburt & Gordon?
3. Albert Beirnes:
Albert was a cousin of Grandpa Beirnes. He was Cele's, Ethel's, Wilburt & Gordon's father.
4. Thomas Henry Armstrong:
This could not have been a relative because he was too young to be Aunt Della's grandfather and to her knowledge he doesn't belong to us.
- 5, 6, & 7. Aunt Della not clear on any of this.

Questions arising out of Della's statement:

1. Thomas Armstrong:
 - a) Doesn't remember his wife's name.
 - b) His wife is buried in Parry Sound.
 - c) Henry, Sam, Frank & Bill came west with him.
 - d) He died of a stroke.
 - e) Buried at Asquith.
 - f) Albert Beirnes at Asquith not Ruthilda was a cousin.
2. Albert Beirnes:
 - a) Died of a stroke.
 - b) The family did not settle in the Maritimes. They came from Ireland to Ontario to Juniata (Asquith).
 - c) His wife's name was Maggie (Margaret?). Auntie doesn't know how she died but she is buried at Asquith.
3. John Beirnes:
 - a) Doesn't know the name of his first wife. Baby not named. They are buried at Parry Sound.
 - * Interesting sidelight. John's first wife was his first cousin and John thought that they both died because it was God's judgement.
 - b) the family came West because Uncle Joe and Aunt Em talked them into it.
 - c) This should be Springwater, Saskatchewan. Wilbur McFadyen and Tom Beirnes lived there. Della kept house for Tom.
 - d) The Beirnes family in Juniata prior to Della's family must have been Uncle Joe and Aunt Em.