

Harry G. McIlmoyl Family

Harry McIlmoyl was born in Ontario, about 40 miles north of Peterborough, 1875. He grew up on his father's farm in the bush and rock of the Canadian Shield. There was very little chance for an education as boys had to go to work very early in life. He worked in the woods in the winter and on the river-drive in the spring. He acquired his own farm near his father's and worked it in the summer months.

He married Ella Hales in 1905 and they lived on the farm for the next eight years. She was born on a farm a short distance from his home in 1884. They attended the same church and had apparently decided early in life that they would marry when they could.

There were four boys born while living here: Alvin (1906), Arnold (1908), Edward (Ted) (1910), and Fred (1913). Harry had always wanted to go west where he felt there would be more opportunities for his family. After several trips west on harvest excursions, the opportunity to purchase a business in Southey Saskatchewan came up. He was able to sell his farm and make the move. His brother-in-law, Bob Hales, had gone in with him, and in April 1913, after the birth of Fred, the two of them set out for Southey. The families followed, arriving in Southey in July. Temporary accommodations were found and house building began.

The business they had bought from Ben Pekrul was the Cockshutt Plow Co. Agency and Imperial Oil Agency. They called it McIlmoyl and Hales and operated under this name for a number of years. Some of the side lines to the business were Front and Wood binders, Adams Wagons, De La Val Cream Separators, and Red River Special Threshers. The Telephone exchange was added in 1914.

In June 1917 tragedy struck. Alvin was playing ball in school when a batted ball struck him in the forehead. Although seriously injured, he was able to walk home. In spite of all the doctor could do, he died three days later. It was a severe blow to the family but the sympathy and help of the community softened the blow and life went on.

Two more children were born, Hilda in 1918 and Donald in 1920.

In 1924 the partnership was dissolved. Mr. Hales took over the Telephone exchange and Harry carried on with the machine and oil business. The boys were big



Harry and Ella McIlmoyl wedding — 1905

enough to help and as the years went by business was increased. About 1927 a truck was purchased and used for local delivery. Harvest time was always hectic as gas powered tractors came into use and gas was being hauled from Regina and delivered to the threshing outfits.

Harry served in many capacities in village life. He was on council for some time – about 15 years, and also on the school board. He was fire chief for many years and served on the Methodist and United Church boards for 24 years. He served on the Board of Elders most of this time and was Treasurer for many years, holding all three positions at the time of his death.

The family was growing up, business was good, everything seemed to point to a prosperous future when the “dirty thirties” came. It meant a great slowdown in business, savings disappeared and everybody had to tighten their belts and make do as best they could. It was during this period that trading came into being. Meat and wood became mediums of exchange. It was a struggle to obtain enough cash for the necessities. Farmers were in desperate straits. Lack of deed for horses brought about the switch to power farming. It was a gradual change as horses had to be used to purchase the tractor and they, in turn, had to be disposed of. Harry looked to the north and was able to sell some teams. It did help to keep things going as cash was received for the horses.

Early in the year of 1938 Harry took sick and passed away. Arnold and Fred continued to operate the business with Mrs. McIlmoyl as silent partner. She had worked along with her husband all through the years in the west, had raised her family, used her influence to make changes for the better in the town and in the school. Now that she was left alone she took here husband’s place on the Board of Elders in the church and held this position until her death twenty-five years later (1963).

*(From: Pioneers and Progress:
The History of Southey and District, 1980. pg. 132-133)*