

Harry McIlmoyl and Bob Hales Move to Southey in 1913.

The McIlmoyl's move to Southey in 1913.

Harry, and his brother-in-law, Bob Hales left for Southey a few weeks after the birth of Harry's fourth son, Fredrick. Ella remained on the farm near Apsley, Ontario with 4 little boys, Alvin 6, Arnold 5, Teddy 3, and young Freddy, 4 weeks old. The farm and belongings had been sold, leaving only the things they would need for the next few weeks. Ella's 16-year-old sister Elizabeth stayed with them.

Moving day was a panic. Neighbours came to help move the furniture and as they were moving things out, the new owners were moving things in, causing complete confusion and mess. The children of both families were running everywhere, screaming with excitement.

Finally all the trunks, suitcases and other belongings were piled into the wagon, the boys were stick wherever there was room, with Ella and the baby perched on a high seat above them. She had great difficulty trying to hang on to the baby and the seat as the three-mile road to her parents' home was very bumpy. They had a few days there to finish packing and prepare food for the long train ride to Saskatchewan.

The day of departure was very exciting. They were going to ride the 30-40 miles to Peterborough in a bus – their first ride in a automobile. It was due early in the morning, but did not arrive until noon.

After a few miles of travel, they reached "Twin Hills". Everyone had to get out of the bus, carry their luggage and walk up the hill. So all in all, their first automobile ride was quite an experience.

A few days in Peterborough with relatives, then a train ride to Toronto. This was usually a pleasant ride, but there was a excursion to Toronto and the train was packed. When they pulled out of the station Ella was standing in the aisle holding the 4-month-old baby, with the boys and the luggage around her. Kind passengers managed to squeeze them all into seats throughout the coach.

In Toronto, they met Annie Hales and her daughters; Ruby age 14 and Muriel age 8. There was a long wait in the station. How happy they were to board the train where they could relax. They had reserved an upper and lower berth, along with friends of theirs, a man and his daughter who also had upper and lower berths. At the last minute, they changed to another train and cancelled their berths. So there were two ladies and 6 children in 2 seats, with all of the clothing and food needed for 2 days

and nights. Eight people sleeping in a upper and lower berth. By morning Annie and one of the boys were train sick, to add to their discomfort.

In Brandon, they had to stay overnight before taking the local train to Southey. They learned that it was "Fair Week" in Brandon and it would be impossible to get a hotel room. Here they were stranded in the Brandon station. Then, as they were elbowing their way through the crowd, they saw Ben Hales, Bob's brother who was a teacher in Brandon. He had just received a letter from Bob telling of their arrival and he had rushed back from his summer cottage to meet them.

After feeding and bathing the children, the ladies and Ben had some time to relax and talk of their home province of Ontario and of their new home and their future on the prairies.

The following day, they arrived in Southey very hot, dusty and tired, to once again learn that there was no place for them to stay. The men had rented a two-room shack with a minimum of furniture, so there they were, 10 people in two tiny rooms.

The Village of Southey had no trees; just burned-up grass, lots of dust and wind and above all, a hot and blazing sun.

However, the people were very friendly – this was the West.

Taken from: Pioneers and Progress: The History of Southey and District pg 134-135