

SYDNEY SEYMOUR SIMPSON

The following is an account printed about Sydney Seymour Simpson on pages 473 and 474 of the "History of the Province of Saskatchewan". I don't know what year that was but it was about 1912 because that was when he was a Saskatchewan MLA. When this was written there would have been one son living.

Sydney Seymour Simpson is the sitting member of the Provincial legislature from the Battleford constituency, and his experience and character have been valuable assets to the cause of good government in Saskatchewan. As a homesteader, farmer and stock raiser, official land agent, and in many other ways, Mr. Simpson has come to a riper understanding of this province and its people than almost any other member of the legislature, and it is his large capacity for disinterested service that is a special mark of distinction.

He is a pioneer of the Northwest Territories. On the 23rd of April 1883, when he located on his homestead in the Regina district, the first great line of railroad was not yet completed across the present province of Saskatchewan, and outside of some of the old trading posts settlement had little more than begun. The history of the West contains no more interesting chapters than those that detail the experiences of those early farm settlers of the

80's. And Mr. Simpson was one who stuck through the discouraging conditions that quickly and repeatedly decimated the hopeful settlements of those years.

He remained with his homestead, developing it to the best of his ability, and the date of his patent was October 1886. Since that time he had had a varied career not only in private business but also in official duties.

During the summer of 1887 he was engaged as a farm instructor for the industrial school at Battleford, and held that position up to 1892. In 1894, as special constable, he joined the Northwest Mounted Police, being attached to the C Division at Battleford for eight years. He was then appointed instructor at the Indian reserve, where he remained until 1903.

In the spring of 1903, on the arrival of the Barr Colony in northern Saskatchewan, his intimate knowledge of the country led to his appointment as senior assistant to the agent for the Dominion Lands.



Battleford's Town Council in 1905. Standing left to right are Councillors R. C. Laurie, W. Latour, F. S. Bradley, S. S. Simpson, Joseph Daudelin and Auditor Gavin C. Smith. Seated are Councillor R. G. Speers, Mayor Hugh McKenzie and Councillor Alex Rowland.

The town of Battleford was incorporated in 1904 and he was a member of the first town council.

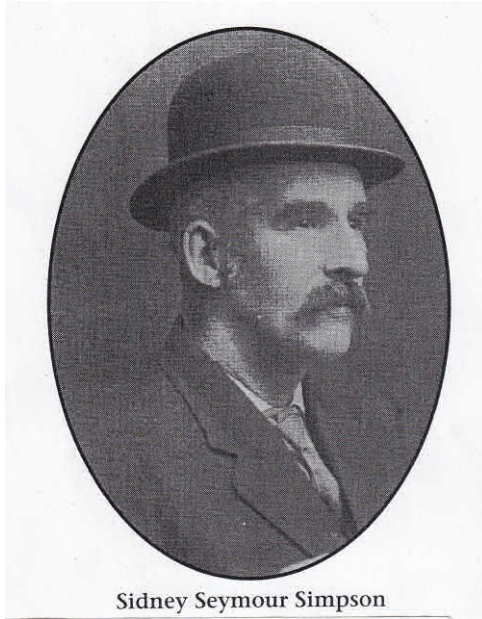
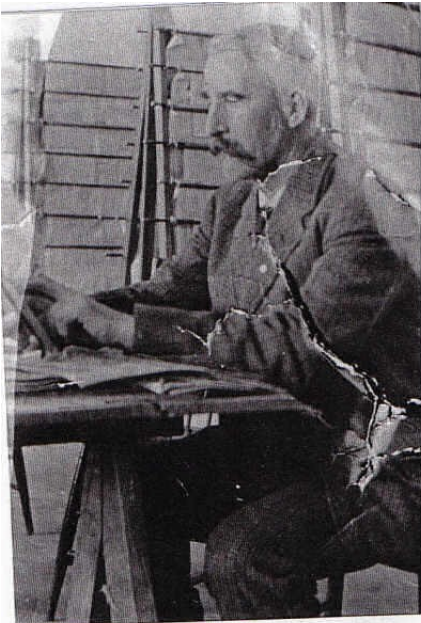


Photo from Battleford Archives

In 1905 he was appointed immigration agent for the Battleford district, and spent two years in the important work of advising and assisting the newcomers who in great numbers were then coming into this region. Probably his best service during the last ten or fifteen years has been rendered by his unselfish promotion of the welfare of settlers, and whether as an official or private citizen he has always been ready to give his personal aid to those who are new in the land.

In 1908 Mr. Simpson was elected from Battleford to the provincial legislature and after the redistribution effected in 1912 was again returned to the same office.



Grandfather Simpson about 1912



Cliff, G'dfather, Harold, G'dmother, Dorothy, Olive. On farm.

Since 1907 his business has been chiefly centered at his homestead near Battleford, where he raises first-class stock and every year practically demonstrates the fruitfulness of Saskatchewan soil.

In 1907 S.S. Simpson entered the real estate and insurance business under the name, Champagne, Speers and Simpson. (item from The Battlefords North-West Historical Society, page 25). And this item from "The Battlefords: A History" by Arlean McPherson- "The first automobile in North Battleford was purchased by Simpson Real Estate in May, 1909".

While the productive part of his life has been spent in Saskatchewan, Mr. Simpson is a native and lived until he was grown in England. He was born at Ledsham, Yorkshire November 18, 1856, a son of Rev. Michael H. and Elizabeth (Hendrik) Simpson of Ledsham. His early schooling was in England up to the age of about fourteen, when he began his practical career in mercantile lines, and continued in that way at Durham and London until 1883, in which year he immigrated to Canada. He was married at Battleford, July 10, 1889, to Miss Margaret Ann Speers, daughter of R.G. Speers of Battleford. Of their children, one son is living.



Sydney Seymour and Margaret Ann Simpson



Grandmother and Aunt Cecilia on Shetland, Kitty

Mr. Simpson is a charter member of Saskatchewan Lodge No. 1 of the Independent Order of the Odd Fellows. His politics is Liberal and his religious associations have always been with the Church of England. While his own career has been largely devoted to the pursuits that take him into the open, he is a strong advocate of the outdoor sports of all kinds for the men who must live and work in shop and office. In all matters he is a live and progressive citizen, and a fine type of the old-timer of Saskatchewan.

Note: The above was written in the early 1900's so remarks about living children no longer apply.

Here I add my own recollections of my grandparents and accounts learned from others.

Not mentioned in the above history is that Grandfather was a baker at the Police Barracks. Besides his kindness to others

was also his sense of humour and tricks he loved to play that my own father inherited. When a horse balked at pulling a wagon he used a hot potato to urge it on!

One of his responsibilities was to assign land to newcomers. He had a wonderful memory for faces and when meeting people again he could accurately recall the property to which each had been assigned. He was also attributed with the ability to run his fingers down a column of pounds, shillings and pence adding them as he went.

When the Barr Colonists came he was concerned about their lack of experience with horses. He chastised a man for racing a horse because she was with foal. The man replied, "I can sure you, Mr. Simpson, I was not racing her. She was running of her own free will and accord."



Dad Simpson, Dorothy hiding behind Grandpa Simpson. Feeding the turkeys.

My father at the time was said to have commented, "If I were around the Barr colonists long enough I would learn how to

speak English.”!

Grandmother would tell about living on the Indian reserves. She had just managed to get one home cleaned then was told they had to move. While on the reserve all the children became ill with scarlet fever. Their bedrooms were upstairs and eventually she was crawling up the steps on her hands and knees to care for them. Children in many other families died as evidenced in Battleford graveyards.

Grandmother related that one day during WW1 she became extremely agitated. In order to relieve this agitation she moved an entire cord of wood to a different spot. When her son, Sidney returned from the war he said that was the day on which he had been in the most danger.

Among my personal memories of Grandfather was as a five year old. His fingers were so curled by Dupuytren's Contracture that my small hand fit snugly into his palm. When others asked him what had happened to his hands he would declare, "You know I had two terms in the Regina legislature and after awhile the crookedness gets into your blood!"

Women from the five families living in "the corner" regularly met for afternoon tea. Since I was the only one of we three siblings still at home, I joined teatime, especially when it was at Grandmother's. With a small cup I still treasure, she served me tea sweetened and diluted with lots of milk. That home was also a favourite escape for me when it came time for supper dishes.

Grandfather created his own problems for me. Having finished his own supper he regularly came over to talk with our family while we ate ours. Often Mother had cake with thick icing for dessert and I liked to save the icing beside my plate while I ate the cake itself. BUT- Grandpa had the nasty habit of snitching the icing, which I assumed he would return. But “no”, it would disappear into his own mouth. I never did successfully solve the dilemma of wanting to save the icing or run the risk of totally losing it.

Farewell picture. Myrtle and grandparents in front of their farm home.



Eventually the grandparents moved from their home next to mine on the farm, to Victoria with their nurse daughter, Myrtle.

Grandfather often sat peacefully in the sunny front hallway. He died in Victoria in 1939.

Grandmother lived on for another twelve years.