

Author unknown

Mr. Alex McDonell had some interesting stories to tell of the early days in the Meanook District. He told of coming from the east to Edmonton and his father had told him to call on a Mr. Morrison who was well known to Alex father but not to Alex. In those days you were nobody unless you had a homestead so Alex was advised to take the SE8-65-23 W4 where Ted Reinholt now lives.

In those days there was not much brush but lots of hay. Of course you had to fence your homestead so Alex ordered 18 spools of wire to come to the Meanook station. He started with his wagon to get the barbed wire and a young slim woman on a saddle horse overtook him. She was invited to ride on the wagon but she refused. Alex said it looked like rain. She replied, "I'm not sugar. I won't melt." This maid was Beatrice Parr, now Mrs. Edwin Parr. Alex got the wire loaded and started for home but it rained so hard he had an awful time as the road was so slippery the horses could not hold their feet. He was advised not to take the baseline but to take Billy Smith Hill. He had to unload part of the wire, haul the other part to the top of the hill, unload and return for the spools he had unloaded, then load up and repeat it several times getting to his farm about midnight.

One time Alex and Dan McKay, a neighbor who later became a homestead inspector, were going to see another homesteader south toward Willow Ridge. Dan McKay was sure he could take a shortcut but they got lost. However they saw a shack so they stopped to inquire where they were. By this time it was quite dark but through the doorway they could see a red glow. When Alex stepped inside the homesteader was down on his knee trying to get the fire to burn and the house was full of smoke. When the homesteader became aware he had visitors he stood up and he could not hear what was being asked till he took the snooze boxes off his ears. He had the snooze boxes over his ears because he suffered with earache. This was on the place where Ronnie Potts lives now and the man was named Dunn.

Alex told there was a time he and Dan started out to go to a dance at South Athabasca and again they got turned around but eventually got to the school about midnight. The school was full of people and many were standing outside. Apparently Dan McKay wanted to see a girl who would be at the dance but it seems that Dan was so late that another man had got there first.

Because there was very little bush, or it was just short and thin, much of the sloping land was broken but was not very productive and the low land was muskeg or too wet to farm. At that time nearly every quarter from Meanook west to Forfar, or what was often called the Galician Hills, was settled on. It has been told that out west of Forfar, where Victor Mamchur lives, all that land or nearly every quarter had a settler on it.