A Territories Shepherd

By J. F. MacCALLUM, Swift Current, Sask.

(Installment One)

(This autobiography will run through most of 1951; it is a careful portrayal by one of Western Canada's pioneers of his experiences and conditions prevailing nearly a half century ago.)

I WAS born on June 6, 1882, at Inverary, Argyleshire, Scotland. There were five in our family, three sons and two daughters. I was the second youngest. My brother, Edward, was the oldest. He lost his life in the First World War. My sister, Chrissie, was the next oldest. She now lives in Victoria, British Columbia. Bella was the third oldest. She lives in Glasgow, Scotland. My brother, Hugh, lives in Swift Current, Saskatchewan, the centre as it were of my tale.

My father was an extensive sheep and cattle dealer in Scotland. He also had a butcher business in Inverary, and I, therefore, learned the butcher business at an early age. Often I used to go with my father on buying trips and attended the different, important livestock markets with him, such as the big market, The Glasgow-Greenock; the Oban; Stirling and Perth markets. I thus gained a thorough knowledge of sheep and cattle. At twelve to fourteen years old I could kill a sheep and dress the carcass.

I sailed from Liverpool, England, on the old Cunard liner, **Umbria,** in March, 1898, arrived in New York where I took train to Montreal. At Montreal I changed trains and came right through to Moose Jaw, Assiniboia, North West Territories. I was sixteen years old.

My mother's brother, Hugh Ferguson, lived in Moose Jaw; had lived there fifteen years previous to my arrival. He had a butcher business in Moose Jaw. He was a cattle dealer as well. In the fall of the year he exported hundreds of cattle to Liverpool and Glasgow. He was in partnership with Arthur Hitchcock in a horse and cattle ranch on the banks of the Saskatchewan River, where the town of Riverhurst now stands.

I arrived in Moose Jaw on March 20, 1898. It was twenty-five degrees below zero. It was very cold weather for me to experience at the beginning.

Moose Jaw then had a population of 650.

Of course, knowing the butcher trade, I was able to go to work right away, only it was new to me to handle frozen beef. But after a few weeks the frozen beef was disposed of and right away we began to kill fresh beef.

At that time Harry Bates was in charge of the shop. Ben Reid also worked in the shop and George Cline drove the delivery. The man who killed in the slaughter house was an Indian they called Big Joe. But he took the name of Joe Ferguson. He was rough at his work but he could slaughter a lot of beef in a day. He belonged to a band of Sioux Indians who used to camp just south of the tracks, about where the Providence Hospital now stands. After a few years this band moved down to the Wood Mountain country, where Big Joe became chief of the tribe, although he retained the name Ferguson which he had taken from my uncle. Some of his sons and grandsons are in the Wood Mountain country yet.

My main work that summer was killing cattle and cutting up meat. My uncle had the contract to supply all the section houses from Moose Jaw west to Maple Creek. And he supplied the section houses down the Soo line to the border town of Portal. There were a number of "extra gangs" on the Soo line and Smith's Boarding Cars fed all these extra gangs. These people used a tremendous lot of beef and the C.P.R. used to furnish iced cars to take the meat to the gangs and to Maple Creek and Portal.

In those days, Olaf Olafson, well known rancher of Old Wives, prominent in the Stock Growers' Association, was a conductor on the freight trains and I can remember him holding the train for me while I loaded beef into the iced car.

Well — when the months of August and September came around, that was the season for my uncle to get out to the cattle ranches, to buy or contract for all the beef cattle he could get. Automobiles were unknown in those days, of course, and he did all his travelling by train and buckboard, down to the Willow Bunch and Wood Mountain countries. He traveled by train to Dundurn, where he hired someone to drive him to the ranches in that district. Then he would go west on the train from Moose Jaw to Swift Current. Usually he got one of his own men from the ranch on the South Saskatchewan River to meet him at Chaplin and from his own ranch he could drive to all the ranches that were on the Saskatchewan River at that time. When it came time for shipping and taking delivery of the cattle I went with him. I went with him for three falls, 1898, 1899 and 1900.

I used to keep his books in the butcher business and for all his cattle transactions. I well remember my first trip to Swift Current to take delivery of cattle. It was the fall of 1899, and the cattle had to be delivered at Rush Lake — now the centre of an extensive irrigation experiment.

Some of the names of the cattlemen delivering cattle to us at Rush Lake made ranching history in the short grass country. Among them were: Sandy McLean of Waldeck; George Howlett; the McNee Brothers; George Smith; Jack Furnis; Harry Richardson; "Bob" Cruickshank; Richardson and Giles; Sam Lytle and "Old Man" Belhumair.

These ranchers all ran good-sized herds. Bob Cruickshank had the biggest herd. He also bought cattle, all the year round, at Swift Current. He had a vast tract of land leased at Rush Lake, much of it well fenced. My uncle bought Cruickshank's cattle that fall of 1899.

These cattle were unloaded at Moose Jaw where they were sorted. The tops went for export to Glasgow and Liverpool; the balance — or next best — to Winnipeg. We held the "rough end" and culls at Moose Jaw for slaughter. Some we sent out for the winter to be finished on grain by farmers close to Moose Jaw.

But the real big herds used to come from Willow Bunch and Wood Mountain. They drove them across country following the old pole line trail.

When we would be sorting the cattle at Moose Jaw, Colonel Harry Mullins of

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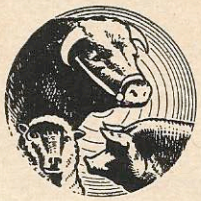

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A TERRITORIES SHEPHERD

(Continued from Page 15)

Winnipeg would always be on hand. He and my uncle worked as partners in the export business. Here I gained a lot of experience in knowing and handling cattle. Colonel Mullins was an expert at the business. I studied his methods.

I had some good saddle horses, well trained and "broke" to cut out cattle. So as a young lad I soon learned how to ride and handle stock.

Those Wood Mountain and Willow Bunch cattle were wild. Some big herds were grazed in that country by such widely known cattlemen as William Ogle and Pascal Bonneau. William Ogle was a rich Englishman who afterwards inherited a large estate with a title, but some of his family still live at Wood Mountain.

One of Pascal Bonneau's sons, by the name of Treffle, got to be a very good friend of mine in later years. He and I were on the executive of the Saskatchewan Stock Growers' together.

In those days no farming was done west of Caron; that is, twenty miles west of Moose Jaw. But there were quite a few ranchers south and west of Moose Jaw, in the Dirt Hills. Doctor Turnbull of Moose Jaw ran a big bunch of cattle west of Yellow Grass, diagonally south-east from Moose Jaw. Then there were G. M. Annables; Mowatts'; Paddy Doyle; Marlatts; Bill Holmes; Grayson's; Olaf Olafson's; Campbells and T. D. Watson; all running big bunches of cattle and horses south-west of Moose Jaw.

There was, too, the well-known Walsh Ranch which was located near to where the town of Dendron now is. Practically every section boss and station agent, west of Moose Jaw, ran herds of cattle in those days. Such men as Manley and Gosling at Parkbeg; Richardson and Giles at Chaplin; Chandler at Ernfold; Sandy McLean at Waldeck; Bill McTaggart and Bob Cutting at Swift Current. Prices paid in those days look puny alongside those paid today. Three and four-year-old steers sold from $25 to $45 a head, according to quality. Good, fat cows brought from $15 to $25 a head. Nothing was sold for beef under three years old.

But cattle could be run cheap; lots of grazing, and hay everywhere to be got for the putting up. Taxes were low and cattlemen did not have to go to much expense for fencing. It was free range — a stockman's paradise. Cattle and horses were the stock kept on the ranches in the Moose Jaw district. I only remember one sheep ranch in the district, owned by a man by the name of Joel Bates. Bates ran about 1,500 head in the Dirt Hills, south-west of Moose Jaw. G. M. Annable of Moose Jaw did a big business buying and selling horses. He used to bring big bunches of horses across from Montana and travel them east from Moose Jaw into Manitoba selling them to farmers as he went along. He had a camp outfit and six or seven men. Harry Gilbert was Annable's foreman, an A1 horse-breaker and rider.

Although G. M. Annable lived in Moose Jaw his ranch was located in the Dirt Hills. His brother Josh looked after the ranch. Another good rider who worked on the Grayson Ranch and also with G. M. Annable was Jay Gould, a splendid horseman, but who in later years worked for the C.P.R. For many years he was passenger conductor on the main line running from Moose Jaw to Medicine Hat.

On those horse-trading expeditions to Manitoba, G. M. went along with his men. On the return trip they brought a big herd of stocker cattle back with them; cattle which he got in trade for his horses. Moose Jaw was quite a cow town in those days.

On the twenty-fourth of May — Victoria Day — they always had horse races and other sports in Moose Jaw. I sure remember May 24, 1900. I was then eighteen.

I was instructed by my uncle, Hugh Ferguson, to look after a black mare. Hitchcock and Ferguson had bought her in Winnipeg, and she was shipped in on the quiet, to take part in the races on the twenty-fourth. Her name was **"Black Ruth"**. A negro appeared from nowhere to drive her. My job was feeding, watering and looking after her in general till the races were over. I kept her in a little barn behind Ferguson's house, which stood where Eaton's store now stands. The two main racehorse men in Moose Jaw at that time were the Battells, Toby and Joe. And there was Symington, who had a baker's business in Moose Jaw.

Well, anyway, the race came off and there was great excitement when this black mare showed up with a colored man driving. Toby Battell was driving a bay trotting stallion.

After several heats the judges declared a tie. Because of the squabbling the heats were run again. Pandemonium

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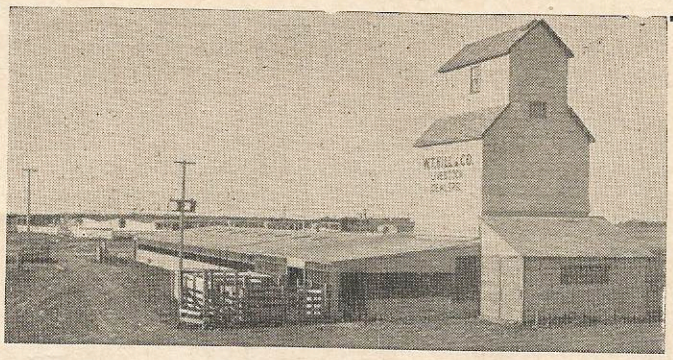
raged when Battell's stallion was declared the winner. The truth was the mare was getting old and had not the stamina of the younger stallion.

A week or so after this race I was told to take the mare down to the Battell Barns at seven o'clock in the morning. Old Henry Battell, father of Toby and Joe, owned the stallion and Henry instructed me to be out at the barn on the dot at seven. Maybe I was a few minutes early, or old Henry was a few minutes late. Anyway, when I got there, Joe had taken the stallion out and bred **Black Ruth.** Then Hitchcock and Ferguson sent the mare out to the ranch on the South Saskatchewan, but I never learned whether she raised a colt or not.

In July, 1900, Hugh Ferguson sold his butcher business to a man by the name of Frank Colborne. I stayed a month with Colborne, in the shop, after he took over, and collected what accounts I could for Ferguson. My uncle ran a lot of his business on monthly credits. However, in August and September of 1900, I was with Ferguson again on his buying trips, taking delivery; cutting and sorting out cattle became a daily grind. But the experience I got in the falls of 1898 and 1899 stood me in good stead later on. I could do it as well as the older hands.

There was a young lad about my age who worked a lot for Ferguson. His name was Neil Morrison, and about the end of September, Ferguson had bought about three hundred one- and two-year-old steers from G. M. Annable. The steers were out on the ranch in the Dirt Hills, and Neil Morrison and I went out to "Mack's" ranch (Annable was better known by that name) and drove them to Moose Jaw. We held them south of Moose Jaw (where the wild animal park is now) for a few days. There it was arranged the cattle were to be driven out to Hitchcock and Ferguson's ranch on the South Saskatchewan. Harry Richardson, known as "Long Harry", a brother of Mrs. James Smart at Saskatchewan Landing, was in Moose Jaw at the time and Ferguson hired him to help Neil Morrison and me to drive the three hundred head of steers to the Hitchcock and Ferguson ranch. Harry's own ranch was a few miles further up the river.

When I returned to Moose Jaw after trailing those steers, it was the first of October, and as Ferguson was not in the butcher business any more I began to think of what I should do. I could have stayed on at the Hitchcock - Ferguson ranch, but I had no use for the foreman, Billie Beattie, and I was also of the opinion that Billie did not want me. As a matter of fact, I overheard him talking to one of the other hands, saying he did not want me or any other relatives of his employers on the ranch. In talking the situation over with Ferguson and Arthur Hitchcock, Hitchcock told me that Beattie objected to one of Ferguson's nephews working on the ranch. I came to the conclusion I would be better to get out and work for strangers. I learned, also, that on the big cattle ranches they only employed riders from April to October. Only one or two men were kept on in winter time, to feed calves and do odd jobs around the ranch. But I was young and wanted a steady job for winter as well as summer, and I had noticed that a lot of cowboys and riders came into Moose Jaw for the winter and did nothing but play pool and then went out to work in the spring — broke.



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Mr. Hitchcock, by the way, was operating a private bank in Moose Jaw, at that time under the name of Hitchcock and McCulloch. He told me the sheep ranchers employed men the year round, and as I had had experience in handling sheep in Scotland, I thought, if I could get on to a sheep ranch I might like it.

As I have said, Joel Bates had the only bunch of sheep around Moose Jaw, about 1,500 head in one band, but he did not require any help. But he did tell me that the Canadian Land and Ranch Company had a lot of sheep around Swift Current and that he was well acquainted with Mr. D. H. Andrews, the general manager, who lived at Crane Lake.

This sheep outfit was better known as the 76 Outfit from the cattle brand of the same people. And Arthur Hitchcock knew J. A. Grant, president and manager of the Sarnia Ranching Company, at Walsh near Medicine Hat. So Mr. Hitchcock wrote to both these men telling them about me wanting a position. Mr. Andrews replied saying that there were no vacancies at the time, but that he had given my name and address to Mr. Alexander, sheep manager at Swift Current. Mr. Alexander notified me that all his men were placed for the winter, but in the spring he would need a number of men and that he was keeping my name and address on file. Mr. Hitchcock received a letter from J. A. Grant of Walsh, asking me to go up to Walsh right away, and he would start me to work. So I arrived in Walsh about the middle of October, 1900. I got there in time to join the fall roundup.

(Continued in next issue)

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