

JESSIE FLORENCE (LAURIE) DEGEAR

Jessie Laurie was born in 1868 in Windsor, Ontario, daughter of P. G. Laurie and his wife of Loyalist descent, Mary Carney. The family started westward when Jessie was two, travelling by train, boat, stage coach, and steamer to reach Winnipeg in what was then the Red River Colony. Ten years later by train, boxcar, and democrat they arrived in Battleford in the Northwest Territories (Assiniboia). In 1885, when the Riel Rebellion broke out, Jessie described the refuge of the town's people's in the barracks, east of the new town.

"I remember when crossing the Battle River sitting on the bottom of the buckboard at the back that water came in the buckboard, as the river was melting. That was March 28. The barracks was situated on the south side of the Saskatchewan River, about a mile east of the new town. At that time it was surrounded by a ten foot stockade made of large logs placed side by side on end. There was a bastion at the southeast corner of the stockade. From there one could get a good view. A trench had been dug around inside the enclosure and bags of sand piled against the stockade with portholes for the men to shoot through if necessary. A sentinel was in front of the guardroom, which was in the northwest corner of the stockade, then more outside quite close, then even farther out. The next ones were mounted and went scouting farther out from the barracks. At certain hours the call would start, "NO. 1, ALL'S WELL," to be taken up by No. 2 until all had answered. If the sentry was mounted he might have been too far away to hear the call. One night there was great excitement as a shot was heard. The assembly was sounded and all the men turned out. On investigation it was learned that a sentry had stepped into a gopher hole, causing his rifle to go off."

Jesse married J. C. DeGear, a former constable of the Royal North West Mounted Police in 1887. He joined the force as DeGear and mustered out as DeGear. He was the son of Cicero DeGear and *Barbara Young. They lived in Hamilton, Ontario for a short while and then spent the rest of their lives in Battleford, Saskatchewan with the exception of two years at the White Fish Lake Reserve in Alberta. Jessie had a child about every two years and watched some of them die from whooping cough, scarlet fever and diphtheria. She also suffered from some of the diseases herself.

Her father P.G. Laurie brought a printing press with him from the east and founded the Saskatchewan Herald. Her brother, Dick, took it over in 1903 when their father died. Jessie worked there for many years until in 1938 it ceased publication on Dick's death. She set type, did some writing and helped distribute the papers, ending with the issue reporting her brother's death. Jessie also worked as the relieving matron at the Women's Jail for a summer. At the age of seventy-one she taught herself to type and wrote her memoirs.

* Barbara Young was the granddaughter of Peter Young. She was descended from five Loyalists - Adam Young, Daniel Young, Hendrick Windecker, Christian Risely,**Hannah Schauer, Roloef Vandecar (many other spellings) and Jacob Smith Sr.

** Hannah Schauer (Showers) was one of the few Loyalist women who received her land grant in her own name. She had three sons in the Butler's Rangers.

Information for all mentioned above is from [To Build a Cairn](#), a publication of the Regina Branch UELAC - ISBN 0-9738140-0-4

Source: [The Story of My Life 1868-1940](#) - Jessie Florence DeGear
[Memoirs of Pioneer Life on the Prairies](#) - Sisters Jessie DeGear and Effie Storer, in the possession of Jessie's grandson, Robert Morgan, Edmonton Branch, UELAC With permission from Robert Morgan UE Edmonton Branch UELAC and Harold Morgan UE - Victoria and Thompson/Okanagan Branches UELAC