

JOSEPH ERNEST SYMES 1879-1910

It would be interesting to know how many of the settlers who flooded into what is now Saskatchewan prior to 1905 were of Loyalist descent. Among these were Ernest and Mary Symes*. They were cousins and so shared the same Loyalist lineage. One was of Palatine German background, the other Dutch.

The Barnhart family had fled to the English colony across the Atlantic, where with Queen Anne's help, they and others relocated to New York province. A grandson, John, was farming on the east branch of the Delaware River when the American Revolution broke out. Before 1780, he had gone on raids into New York State with Joseph Brant and joined the King's Royal Regiment in New York. (KRRNY)

The Midaugh family, from Heicop, Holland had established themselves around Brookland about 1652. A grandson Stephen lost a farm and grist mill in Ulster County when the war ended. His brother, Jacob, was hanged by the rebels at Kingston Landing. Stephen was at Fort Niagara about 1776 with John Butler and joined Munroe's Company in the King's Royal Regiment of New York in 1777. Both John Barnhart and Stephen Midaugh initially settled in the Royal Townships of Upper Canada. John went to Cornwall, Ontario, while Stephen farmed at Moraviantown, prior to the War of 1812.



The family of Margaret Pilkey Symes and Joseph Symes c 1892

John Barnhart's daughter, Catherine, married Peter Pilkey of Scarborough Township and they raised nine sons. Stephen Midaugh's daughter Margaret married Peter Thibaudeau and settled in the Humber Valley area. Their daughter, Elizabeth, married Catherine and Peter's son, George Pilkey and raised their family of four. George Pilkey and raised their family of fourteen at Markdale, Ontario. Elizabeth and George Pilkey's daughter, Margaret, married Joseph Symes from Goodwood, Ontario. Their oldest son of a family of seven was Joseph Ernest Symes, born 27 December, 1870.

Mary Symes, the daughter of Elizabeth Ann Pilkey (sister of Margaret) and Thomas Symes, brother of Joseph, was born 20 March, 1875 at Markdale, Ontario. Joseph Ernest and Mary married in Toronto and came west to Winnipeg about 1899. Their son, Henry and daughter Royal were born there. (Royal was named because she was born the day the Princess Royal died.) Another daughter Aline was born in 1903 but died of pneumonia in 1904. They moved from Winnipeg to Boissevain, Manitoba in 1903, where Ernest's brother Jack was working.

Before 1905, Saskatchewan was called the District of Assiniboia in the North West Territories. When the area east of the present day Weyburn was opened for homesteads the promise of land prompted the Symes to file in 1904 on a quarter section, three miles south of what would become the hamlet of Froude. Ernest's parents and his brothers Jack and William filed on adjoining

quarters. In April 1905, they shipped their belongings by rail to Heward, the nearest station. Ernest, Mary and the daughter Royal, traveled by buggy from Boissevain. They arrived in the late afternoon and slept under the buggy that night. Royal remembered walking in the furrow, behind



Ernest, Royal and Mary Symes, November 1904

her father as he broke the first ten acres. In 1907, a frame house of the same size replaced their sod house. A good well was bored and trees from Indianhead, Saskatchewan were planted.

A bright promising future ended when on 27 September, 1910 Ernest died of tuberculosis. He was buried on the homestead, just south of the trees he had planted three years before. Ernest's father had died suddenly in February 1910. Ernest's

brother Jack had been killed in a well-drilling accident in September of the same year. In November, Ernest's mother, Margaret, his brother William and Jack's widow Marie returned to live on the farm at Goodwood, Ontario.

Mary Symes and her two children stayed in Froude. Henry farmed his father's homestead and eventually bought more land. Royal married Kristjan Bjarnason and raised a family of ten on their farm 3 miles east of Froude.

* Symes rhymes with hymns

Source: Logan Bjarnason UE, Regina Branch UELAC



Ernest and Mary Symes' homestead prior to restoration in Aug. 1994



Symes' homestead restored as it would have been in 1907