

A Territories' Shepherd

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

INSTALLMENT 3

THAT lambing season of 1901 was certainly a good one. The weather was good, and we had no losses, but from my experience in later years, I know that in the Canadian West sheepmen must have some shelter for lambing, but, apparently, the 76 Ranch always lambled out on the open prairie.

At that time 76 had practically all the south west country to themselves. In summer they used tents and could move camp easy to any place where there was feed and water. The summer of 1901 they had three dry bands of about 3,000 in each band. They were made up of yearling ewes and one- and two-year-old wethers. They were run on the creek east of Swift Current and down and around Waldeck some eleven miles east of Swift Current. Herders in charge of these bands were George Law, Billy McKay and Dan McIntyre. This 7,000 populated Swift Current of 1949 was a wee place then—no farmers, mostly C.P.R. men.

The Barkers ran the C.P.R. dining hall. Charlie Reid and William Milburn each had a little store across from the station and a Mrs. Vaudruel ran the post office. The post office site is now occupied by a large dry-goods store.

A man by the name of Hood was station agent. I think I have mentioned all the business places in town.

And that year disaster came to the sheep bands and their herders.

In July, just after shearing was over, a disease broke out among the sheep. It started first in the "dry bands" grazing down the Swift Current Creek toward Waldeck. Fifty to a hundred died in each band every day! It spread to the bands up the creek, south west of Swift Current, but, as I was farthest up the creek there was not so much loss in my band. It was a problem to know what was the cause of the swift deaths in the bands. Nobody seemed to know anything about it. Nor could the government veterinarians diagnose the disease. They were of the opinion that it might be poison weeds. Botanists were brought from Ottawa to pick and find all weeds where the sheep fed, but any that died of weed poisoning did not have the symptoms that the others had. The sheep were moved to fresh camping grounds but the losses continued.

At this point let me state that two shepherds, Andrew and James McGovern, started with the 76 when I did. They came to the Canadian west from Patagonia in South America, and they quit shepherding to go shearing. They joined the shearing gang which sheared all 76 sheep.

And that season Walter Burnett and James Beattie arrived from Scotland about the end of June. They had both been shepherds in Scotland. They stopped in at the Immigration Office at Winnipeg to look for jobs, where they were advised to come on to the 76 Ranch at Swift Current. The 76 got practically all their help from the Immigration Office

in Winnipeg; so when Walter Burnett and James Beattie arrived in Swift Current they took the bands over that the McGovern brothers had. By the time this sheep disease was raging the McGovern had left the district. Presently, the disease began to subside—after a loss of from three to four thousand sheep.

Then it was that Walter Law who was herding on the creek at the "Six Mile Bush" took sick with a bad hand and arm. They rushed him to hospital at Medicine Hat. A small amount was taken from all the 76 employees wages to be applied to the Medicine Hat hospital for free treatment.

A Doctor Smythe was the hospital doctor and he was baffled to know what was wrong with Walter's hand. He called in another medical doctor, Doctor Smith. This doctor wanted to know what Walter had been doing at Swift Current. Walter replied that he had been working on a sheep ranch where the sheep were dying by the hundreds. Dr. Smith took a smear from the bad hand and discovered the germs of anthrax. That was how they discovered that the sheep had this dreaded disease. Government veterinarians came from all over with cases of vaccine to vaccinate the sheep.

By this time the disease was subsiding, but, after vaccination more sheep died than had previous. The whole district was quarantined. No stock was allowed

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to be shipped out of a vast territory, but I never knew of any cattle dying with the disease. However, horses died, especially horses that had been used for teaming or riding round the sheep camps. But the loss in sheep was terrific!

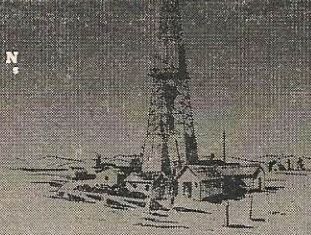
It was never really established how this disease started in the Swift Current district, for the disease was then unknown in Canada or the United States. But it was known to be prevalent in South America, and it was presumed that there was a possibility that the McGovern Brothers, who had come from Patagonia, might have brought the germs in their shearing equipment.

Extra mounted police were sent to Swift Current and district and extra men were hired to ride patrol to see that no stock got into the quarantined area. That was the time I met Mr. John Redmond, who is now editor of the Maple Creek

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A TERRITORIES SHEPHERD (Continued from Page 39)

News. He was a member of the Mounted Police force when I met him.

Cattle Outfits

The only big cattle outfit that grazed this territory at that period was also the 76 outfit. Their headquarters were at Crane Lake, north east from Maple Creek, and where their General Manager, D. H. Andrews, resided. A Mr. Slater kept their books and Fred Craig was the wagon boss in charge of all the roundups. All 76 cattle were herded away from the infected area where sheep and horses had died, and no other stock was allowed to pass through.

The only small ranchers that I remember in this district, at that period, were William Alexander, sheep manager of the 76, who had a ranch east of Swift Current airport is now situated—about six miles east from Swift Current. He ran about 200 head of Clydesdale horses. Dan McLachlan and Dave Elams each had ranches near where the hamlet of Burnham now is. They ran from 300 to 400 head of cattle each. In later years Dave Elams moved out to the Saskatchewan Landing to the valleys between the high bluffs overlooking the South Saskatchewan, near to the place where they are constructing a bridge over the river, to replace the picturesque but old fashioned ferry; so that Highway No. 4, one of the west's main road arteries can continue without interruption clear up to the north of the province and south to the United States boundary. William Brunyee took over the Elams ranch after Mr. Elams' death. Dan McLachlan sold out and went into partnership with George Webster, another well known rancher, business man and character, of what is now Saskatchewan's south west. But this time Dan went into the hotel business. He and George Webster built the hotel at Morse, Sask., east of Swift Current.

John Oman, sheep foreman of the 76, ran 400 head of cattle south of Swift Current, in the big coulee close to where No. 4 Highway crosses. There was a good spring in the coulee which used to be known as Thomson's Coulee. Mr. Oman's two sons, John and Alec, looked after the cattle.

In 1901 there was not a single settler on Swift Current Creek, southward until you reached George Gunn's Ranch, in what was called the Big Bend, near to where the town of Simmie now is. And there were no more settlers until you got to the forks of the north and south branches of the creek, where Donald and Kenneth Sinclair, two brothers, had located a horse and cattle ranch. The South Saskatchewan, along the Swift Current Creek, north from Swift Current, were as follows:

Mat Wilson, near to where the 17 Mile Bridge now is. Next the McNee brothers, Jim and Billy, a ranch afterwards owned by my son, Edward. Next came Ned Hogg, who still operates it, in conjunction with his son, Ernie. Ed Tully came next. Ed's ranch was later acquired by the late Walter Knight, a genial bulk of a man, who had the distinction of being the first white baby born in the Swift Current district. The last was the ranch of George Smith near the mouth of the creek. Mr. Smith passed on a few years ago, full of years and honored by a community stretching for a hundred miles



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each way. Frank Godwin operated at the Landing and J. Y. Jones, who is remembered for his gallant attempt to drive a herd of steers from Saskatchewan Landing to the Yukon for meat for the argonauts of the '98 rush and James Smart, who died two years ago at ninety-five. Mr. Smart brought out a convoy of people from England to work for the 76. He also fought in the South African campaign of 1899-1902. These were all the ranchers I remember at that time on the creek north of Swift Current.

That summer a man by the name of Bates with his family trailed a hundred head of cattle from Montana. They camped and grazed any place while looking for a location. Bates settled that fall about fifteen miles south of Pelletier Lake near where Pat Trottier and Solomon Pritchard had ranches. He stayed in that location for four or five years then

moved near to the White Mud River, near to the south of Mule Creek, south east of where the town of Shaunavon now is. Solomon Pritchard ran about 250 head of cattle for Charlie Reid pioneer store keeper of Swift Current. Pat Trottier ran quite a bunch, too. So the Mounted Police and the Quarantine Riders had a large territory to cover to see that no stock got out of the infected district, or passed through it.

In the middle of September, while the veterinarians were still vaccinating sheep—each sheep had to be vaccinated twice, the second vaccination to be done one week after the first—we got a bad snow storm. That delayed the vets in their work, and as there were such stunning losses after vaccination, D. H. Andrews, the general manager, refused to have any more sheep vaccinated. His words were:

"That if the government wanted to do

any more experimental work, they should purchase all the sheep and assume the loss."

So it was that some 4,000 were only vaccinated once, but all the rest had been done twice. The severest loss was in the bands near to Swift Current and east down in the Waldeck district.

At last it was decided to build a temporary dipping vat, at No. 4 camp (12 Mile Shed) up the creek, rather than risk taking the sheep to the large substantial dipping vat that was constructed near the creek where the Swift Current power house now stands. So, early in October, all the ewe bands with lambs were dipped at the 12 Mile Shed, and the lambs weaned and put into shape to go into winter quarters. I got a band of 3,000 lambs to herd, which were to be wintered at Gull Lake, thirty-five miles west of Swift Current. They sent Jim Beattie with me, as 3,000 took some herding for a week or two after weaning. We moved them up the creek and camped just above the spot where Duncairn Dam, which can hold 85,000 acre feet of water, is built.

Adam Rutherford was teamster with the 76 Outfit that summer and he put up a good corral for us, so we camped there for two weeks. Then we started our move over to Gull Lake. Our guide and landmark was to drive or herd toward the "EARS". The second night out we made the Ears, two big buttes east of Gull Lake. They can be recognized by their name for square miles around.

We had a teamster by the name of Jim MacDonald to move the camp along. Jim was pretty handy at pitching tent and getting a meal ready.

Donald MacGillivray was foreman at Gull Lake and he was on the lookout for us coming. We had instructions to camp about four miles east of Gull Lake on the north side of the railroad track. There was a little creek called Dirt Creek with a lot of water holes in it. Donald met us on the south of the track and helped us across the railway and showed us a good spot to pitch camp.

There were no settlers living in that territory at that time. It was wide open country. All that was in Gull Lake was the 76 Ranch house. Donald MacGillivray was foreman with his wife, two sons and a daughter, James, John and Fanny.

I had forgotten, there was a section house too, where Sam Johnson, section foreman, lived with three or four section men. A Mrs. Boyd was the cook and I had known her in Moose Jaw when she cooked in the section house there. A Miss Pen-nock was station agent and her mother and sister lived with her. A man named Murdock with his wife was the pumpman. So that was the population of Gull Lake in 1901-1902.



When Jim Beattie and I got the camp pitched, and our teamster had returned to Swift Current, Beattie was out of a job. Mr. Alexander told him at dipping and weaning that he would not require so many shepherds, as they had lost so many sheep with anthrax. And we got to know that his chum, Walter Burnett, who came from Scotland to Canada with him, was on the road to Gull Lake also with a band of 3,000 yearling ewes. Burnett was camped east of me, close to where the village of Antelope now is, about eight miles from me, and on the same little creek. So Burnett, Beattie and I had a little farewell party at the camp. Beattie arranged to go to Montana as we had heard it was easy to get a job

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