

Ada Olive Watson nee Tatton (1887-1981)

Submitted by: Pearl O. Surring (nee Watson), daughter and Iris E. Johnson, granddaughter

Olive was born August 10th, 1887 in the Township of Markham, York County, Ontario to Louisa Mary (Davis) and Elwood Tatton. She had an older brother Ernest and a younger sister Edna. Olive received her schooling at Schonberg.



On February 11th, 1914 she was married to Robert Harvey Watson by Reverend D. Prosser. Olive and Robert were both from the village of Schomberg, York County, Ontario at this time. Robert had come west to Weyburn, Saskatchewan in 1911 and worked for an uncle. In 1912 he bought ten lots in Weyburn from Saskatchewan Realty Company. He traded three lots to N. R. Hopkins for the south half of section of 19-8-13 W2nd. This was four miles east and one half mile south from Weyburn. The newlyweds came by the Canadian Pacific Railway to Weyburn. It must have been quite a shock for Olive coming to live in a shack. She had come from a nice home in Ontario.

They had six children: Mary Louise born December 8th, 1914, Margaret Jean born May 4th, 1916, Edna Ruth born September 26th, 1917, Robert Norman born July 19th, 1919, Olive Pearl born April 19th, 1921 and Elwood Alexander, born July 2nd, 1926.

Prairie life was very lonesome for Olive. Because they lived close to the railroad tracks, men travelling the rails often stopped for food and water. Many times this was a frightening experience. Life was a struggle with all the work being done by man or horse power. The house was very small, three rooms, a kitchen, living room, bedroom and a porch. The children slept in their parents' bedroom and in the living room where a couch was pulled out. A tanned dark brown horsehide robe was put on the floor between the couch and the sideboard (a piece of furniture for holding dishes) for additional sleeping. Light was supplied by coal oil lamps, heat by a coal and wood cook stove and a coal heater in the living room. Robert hauled soft coal from Estevan with horses and wagon. This trip took several days. They eventually added the NW 1/4 of section 18-8-13-W2 to their land base. Sometimes workers were hired from the Mental Hospital. This didn't always work out satisfactorily.

They had horses, cattle, chickens, turkeys (bronze), and pigs. Horses were the sole source of power for planting and harvesting the crops and for transportation. In later years Robert wouldn't have a tractor. Crops grown were wheat and oats for feed. Hay was cut with a mower and put up loosely into stacks. Cows were milked by hand. Milk was separated and the cream was taken to Weyburn every other day to be sold at the creamery. Bread was home baked. Butter was churned by putting cream into a churn. It had wooden paddles inside. The outside crank was turned by

hand for however long it took the butter to form solid lumps which separated from the liquid whey. The whey was washed off the butter and the water worked out of it with a wooden paddle. It was then salted, put in one pound wooden forms and wrapped in butter paper.

There was fenced pasture for the cattle but they were herded in summer to provide extra feed for them. In winter, water was pumped for the animals from the well. The horses were wintered north of Marmara School and checked by one of the children on horseback.

There were many dry wells on the farm but there was one they could use north of the house. Water was carried by pail for household use. A depression had been scraped out and was used for watering livestock. In winter it was cleared of snow and used for skating. There was only one pair of skates to be shared among the children.

Marmara School was one and one half miles away (five miles east of Weyburn). The children walked in summer and drove a horse and cutter in winter. Norman lit the fire in the mornings to heat the school. They were paid ten cents to haul a can of water for drinking.

There was usually a weekly routine with washing clothes being done on Monday on a scrub board and later with a gas washing machine. Water was hauled by barrel on a stone-boat. During winter a barrel was kept in the house for melting snow. Tuesday was for ironing the clothes by sad irons heated on the stove. Later gas irons were used. Everything was ironed: sheets, pillowcases, tea towels plus all clothing worn including overalls. Clothes were sprinkled with water to dampen and rolled up until it was time to iron. Everything smelled so fresh while this was being done. Olive had started to be a dressmaker in Toronto but had been called home to help look after her sick father. This training was put to good use for her family. She sewed all clothing from underwear to coats. Her mother knit mitts which were sent to the grandchildren at Christmas time.

There was always a big garden. There were three long rows of rhubarb. Rows were wider apart so that scuffling (working the earth with two or three blades with handles attached and pulled by a horse) could be done. Saskatoon berries were picked and canned in the summer. One time the berries were picked at Fort Qu'Appelle yielding a five gallon cream can full.

When she died in 1938 Olive's mother left her a little money. She talked to George Johnston, a neighbour and municipal councilor who encouraged her to buy the Ford car that she wanted. She taught herself to drive. Robert would have nothing to do with the car.

Robert's father, Edwin, from Ontario came to visit at harvest time. Olive enjoyed having him as he helped her in the house and with the children.

After her father died Olive went back to Ontario. She boarded the train with Pearl (five) and Elwood (six months). It was a hard trip as Olive was sick on the train. Pearl

remembers that they stayed in a "big" house where her cousins would play hide and seek and scare her.

The Watsons had a strong faith in God. Olive knelt by her bed each night to say her prayers. They were members of the Baptist church in Weyburn. There was no work done on Sundays except caring for the animals. They couldn't play ball on a Sunday. No card playing, alcohol, smoking or dancing was allowed in the home. During the winter after breakfast on Sunday morning the family would gather and Robert would lead them from the Free Press Weekly Bible study. Family members would read Bible passages and a discussion was held. After this everyone pitched in to do the chores. There was no telephone or radio.

In 1947 Olive & Robert had an auction sale and sold their land. They moved to Chilliwack, BC. Their son Elwood drove them out in their car. As Robert had bought and sold lots in Weyburn, he continued this real estate activity in BC. He was very busy out there working in hop yards, mowing lawns, trimming trees, picking fruit, vegetables and nuts, cutting wood for people, plucking turkeys, working as a night watchman at a hotel. Olive took in boarders. They became members of First Baptist Church. Olive was a member of Anna Denholm Missionary Circle and a Red Cross worker. They had a garden and fruit trees. For quite a few years they picked and sent fruit by train back

to their children and families in Saskatchewan. Robert passed away December 23rd, 1971. Olive moved back to Weyburn, Saskatchewan to be near her children and grandchildren. She passed away June 24th, 1981 and is buried in Green Acres Memorial Garden cemetery.



We give thanks to Olive, our mother/grandmother/great and great, great grandmother for her fortitude in trying times, her love for her family and her strong moral values.

The Watson Family Photo
Back Row – Pearl, Jean, Ruth, Louise
Front Row – Olive, Elwood, Norman, Robert