

John H. Atchison

John H. Atchison was born March 23, 1845, near Kelso, Rockburyshire, Scotland. His father was a laboring man who found it hard times to provide for his growing family. Rockburyshire, which is near the border, is a splendid agricultural country. From Kelso, England could be seen any day. Mr. Atchison had an uncle, Geo. Atchison, who lived in Stratford, Ontario. One day a stranger appeared in Rockburyshire. He wore a fur coat and a great fur cap. Such garments had never before been seen in that part of Scotland. The stranger proved to be the uncle from America. He advised his relations to come to America, "where there was free land and a prospect of a home." The advice was taken, and in June, 1862, Mr. Atchison, together with his father, mother, and brother, left Scotland for the promised land. They went from their home by train to Liverpool, where they took passage to Quebec on the sailing vessel William Rathbone. The captain was part owner of the vessel, and this was his twenty-sixth trip to Quebec. He brought emigrants to America, and returned to England with a cargo of Canadian lumber.

The emigrants were five weeks and three days in passage. One day when a light breeze was blowing, a three-masted schooner passed merrily by the William Rathbone. Later in the day when the wind had risen almost to a gale, they in turn passed the schooner, and cheered lustily. Another day towards the end of the voyage, it took the William Rathbone two days to get past Belle Isle in the St. Lawrence river because of lack of wind and the strong adverse current of the river. The family first went to Stratford, Ontario. Mr. Atchison's father did not like the timber land around Lake Huron that was then open to settlement, and took no claim until he did so in North Dakota.

For seven years Mr. Atchison worked as an ordinary workman on the Grand Trunk railway, and received \$1.10 per day. During this time he married a girl of English parentage. He lived in Georgetown, Ontario, until he came to the United States. In 1874 great changes were made on the Grand Trunk system. Large numbers of men were being discharged. As he, too, was likely to be discharged at any time, he decided to stop working on the railroad and take up land in the newly opened west.

At Sault Ste. Marie Mr. Atchison, together with his wife and two small children, boarded a steamboat with the intention of getting off at Port Arthur and going overland to Manitoba. Of this boatload of emigrants, all but the family of Mr. Atchison and a French family did so. They, however, decided to go to Duluth, and thence by rail to Moorhead, Minnesota, because the great crowds made overland transportation extremely difficult. At Moorhead they waited two and one-half days for a boat. The trip to Winnipeg occupied seven and one-half days. Although Mrs. Atchison was in Winnipeg three weeks, none of the emigrants who were to come by the overland route were ever seen by her. While on the Red river at about five o'clock one morning, Mr. Atchison went ashore to buy milk at a nearby farm house. At about ten o'clock that day, after going quite steadily since starting, the boat stopped, and again he went ashore to buy milk at a farm house. The same woman that he had met in the morning came to the door. He said, "I declare, you look just like the woman I met this morning!" Her reply relieved him. "And you are the same man," she said. "You are not the only one to be fooled in that way." The boat had been all the morning going around a large bend in the river.

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On arriving at Winnipeg he left his wife and children and went land seeking. He was gone three weeks, but saw no land in Canada that suited him. In July, 1874, he pre-empted land three and one-fourth miles south of the line. It was near Smuggler's Point, and not far from Neche. At Pembina as a boat loaded with land seekers arrived from Moorhead, a man with a revolver in each hand said, "Now, watch!" and began shooting into the air and into the ground. This frightened the people so that none of them would land in the states. On this boat Mr. Atchison returned to Winnipeg for his family. On coming back to Pembina two days later, July 6, 1874, he found the town full of frightened and excited people from the country around. The Indians had killed three half breeds, and the people feared a massacre. (This is known as the Delorme Massacre. It occurred July 5, 1874) Shortly after they came to Pembina, Mrs. Atchison kept house for Judson LaMoure for two or three weeks.

The Atchison family saw fifty Red river carts come into Pembina with buffalo hides, the best of which sold for \$4.50. The spring of 1880 the Mennonites settled the Canadian land near the border. They made dugouts for houses. In the following spring their homes were flooded, and an epidemic of scarlet fever and typhoid fever broke out. The Canadian government then forced them to build above ground.

In the spring of 1876 or 1877 Mr. Atchison commuted his claim, and he made a trip to Fargo, then going by stage. He saw nineteen binders at work on a Dalrymple farm. His trip, which cost him \$30, was taken at the advice of a neighboring farmer in Pembina county by the name of Joe Brown. Mr. Atchison had \$200 in gold. One dollar in gold brought \$1.15 in silver. So he went to a bank in Fargo and exchanged his gold for silver on that basis. Then with the \$230 thus gotten, he bought Agricultural College scrip at 65 cents on the dollar. He then used the scrip at face value to pay for his land.

Mr. Atchison decided to leave Pembina county in 1880. He thought that stock raising would be more profitable than farming, for the price of stock was high. A cow brought from \$30 to \$50. He sold his land to a Mennonite for \$1,200. Mr. Atchison relates how some men in the real estate business in Pembina county induced several of the Mennonites to buy timber land south of the line at a high price, and then when the Mennonites attempted to take their timber across the boundary, were not allowed to without paying heavy duty. The result was that all the Mennonites soon sold the land in Pembina county at a loss to the real estate men who had sold it to them.

With stock raising in view, Mr. Atchison chose land near that of his friend, Alexander Saunders. He paid \$70 for Frank Axtell's squatter's right. Mr. Atchison then returned to Pembina and got a team and plow for breaking. In the fall he brought his family and goods to his new home. He came with eighteen head of cattle. He had some difficulty on this journey, for it snowed, and the prairie south of the Goose river had been burned over.

As these early settlers were near the mail route that ran from Valley City to Lee, Mr. Saunders suggested that Mr. Atchison apply for an office. The application was made, and October 24, 1881, the post-

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office of Gallatin was started, with Mr. Atchison as the first postmaster.

At first they paid the carrier to stop for the mail, but after six months he was obliged to bring the mail. For several years after the railroad came to Cooperstown the mail was carried from Valley City, and later from Cooperstown. The number of persons who got their mail at the Gallatin postoffice steadily decreased until the rural free delivery displaced the country office. It was discontinued July 14, 1905.

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J. H. Atchison

J. H. Atchison, farmer Sec 24-145-58, T.O. Gallatin, was born in Scotland in 1846, and was brought up and educated in that country. He emigrated to Perth County Canada in 1861, where he worked on a farm. In 1867 he married Miss Eliza Siddle, the third daughter of John Siddle, of Perth Co. Canada. They have five children living and two deceased. Mr. Atchison went to Manitoba in 1873, and from thence in October 1880, he moved with a team to Dakota, and was the first to settle on the east bank of the Sheyenne River midway between the present towns of Hope and Cooperstown. He has 160 acres of most excellent land, on which, notwithstanding the protracted drought of 1883, he had 25 bushels to the acre. Mr. Atchison is also Postmaster of Gallatin.

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