

June 1, 1926

Biography of D. J. Houghton
--Blanchard T. Houghton

On March 2, 1892 my father, Douglas J. Houghton, son of Joshia and Miranda Houghton, came to North Dakota from St. Clair County, Battle Creek, Michigan landing at Cooperstown which was at that time merely a railroad station and a few scattered shacks. He left Battle Creek, Michigan with the intention of locating in either North Dakota or Montana which offered possibilities for homesteading and finally decided upon Cooperstown, North Dakota as his brother, Charles had already located here.

At the time of his arrival here, a great amount of the land in the vicinity was owned by Mr. Rollen C. Cooper who had a large ranch about a distance of two miles from Cooperstown. This was the first place where my father went to work staying there off and on for about five years.

After leaving the Cooper ranch in 1899, my father went to live with his brother, Charles on his farm further west from Cooperstown. While living with his brother he filed on thirty acres of land, and later he bought one hundred and sixty acres on the same quarter. After he had filed on the thirty acres, which was located in the southwest quarter of section 30 of Cooperstown township.

The first house was a slab shack ten by twelve feet with a flat roof and three square windows. At first the trips to town for provisions were rather hard because the road was at that time straight across country and no direct route to follow. The times it was not so hard to follow were the times when the neighbors would all go together. Some of them went with their oxen and some had horses.

The first crop that my father put in of his own in North Dakota was the total of thirty acres of oats and wheat and the total number of bushels received was 1482 of wheat and oats. The price at that time was from 52¢ to 73¢ for the best wheat, and the best oats were 23¢ and the average that was grown was 12¢. Even when the prices were so low he made a little money and had some feed for the next year.

The second year of his farming for himself in North Dakota was not so prosperous. He broke up some more land and put in more wheat, but this year was the year of the great drought and it left only just straw enough for the stock and no crop at all to speak of. That winter it was very hard--lots of snow and it was hard to get to town for provisions, but the next year was the bumper crop and he fared very well.

My father was married to Miss Katheran Alice Blanchard of St. Clair County, Battle Creek, Michigan. He went to live on his brother's farm close to his own which had only his claim shanty on it and two years later built the house that he occupies at the present time.

The pioneer is now located on his farm southwest of Cooperstown on the southwest quarter of section thirty.

His present address is:

Douglas J. Houghton
Cooperstown, North Dakota
RFD #3

Biography of Houghton Family
--Ruth Houghton

In 1856 Miranda and Joshua Houghton with their family of four children Rebecca, Maria, John, and George moved from Coleberg, Canada, in the Province of Ontario and took up their new homes seven miles west of St. Clair in the county and township of St. Clair.

There they worked a small farm carrying on diversified farming.

During the time of their stay on this farm three sons were born, Benjamin Luther in 1858, Wilmot Peter in 1861 and Charles Walter, on September 15, 1863.

A few years later they moved to the township of Columbus in the county of St. Clair and here worked another farm.

On this farm three sons and one daughter were born to the family of seven.

The children were employed in taking care of cattle, gathering the ripened fruits, for there were large orchards of peaches, apples, etc.

The children played on the rivers and creeks near by, catching fish or swimming. As the family was large, a few of the boys helped the neighbors in spring and fall.

At the age of fourteen Charles Walter went into a lumber camp in Northern Michigan. Here they prepared great logs to be sent down the river in the spring.

He spent four years here. Thrilling letters came from the brothers in North Dakota telling of the opportunities here and of the beautiful prairie land. Thus in 1886 he set out. Taking the train from St. Clair, he came to Cooperstown, North Dakota March 18, 1886.

He was met at the station by his brother. They were drawn by a team of mules, the usual means of transportation, to the brother's home a few miles west of Cooperstown.

Staying a short time with his brother, Charles decided to take work on Cooper's ranch. He herded cattle in the hills north of Cooperstown, rode a bronco all day and slept in a shanty at night.

After a year of herding, Charles took the position of foreman on Cooper's ranch.

He had the superintending of twenty-two thousand acres of land. The men had to be taught the art of riding and driving. Many funny incidents took place at the time a "new hand" came to the ranch. As the mule was the chief animal of burden he was usually ridden but frequently the mules refused to move or even moved too quickly and dislodged their rider.

In the spring a crew of nearly one hundred men was taken on. Wood was brought from the river and sawed for winter use.

Biography of Houghton Family
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Around the early part of April the men were set to work preparing the fields for sowing. When this started, the men had to rise earlier as each had his team to feed, water, and harness.

First twenty-four plows were taken out. Then the harrows and later the drills. If at any time the men needed help that was the supervisor's job to help him.

During the summer they put up hay for feed and summer followed large tracts of land.

When the crops ripened, the binders were taken out. The golden grain was cut and shocked by an army of men. If a man stopped working for a few hours and took a nap behind a shock he was sent to get his time and pay, and was dismissed.

The threshing on the ranch was done by large machines. There were several on the Cooper ranch alone. The supervisors had to be on duty during threshing time to see about the grain. As there was such a large amount of grain to be marketed, they drew it to town and loaded it in cars instead of taking it to the elevator.

Once when the mule of a supervisor refused to move the engineer hit it with a hot poker. The mule didn't seem to enjoy the contact and immediately dislodged his rider.

One spring the Houghton and Nierenberg boys decided to take an antelope hunt up near the James River.

They gathered provisions and blankets and set out. The first night was spent in an oat bin, the second in a school house, and the third in an old log barn. On the fourth night they had reached the Jim River. That night they camped beneath the trees.

The following morning they were up early, preparing for the hunt.

They set out on their broncos and about nine o'clock they spied the antelope in a little coulee. They crept around the hill and just as they came out on the plain the animals spied them and were soon out of sight.

In the afternoon they saw the antelope again. They came up to some old buildings and dismounted. Just then a dog bounded out of a remote corner and with his shrill barking and fierce growls frightened the antelope away.

After that they never got within a mile or two of the animals. Thus the trip was a failure as far as game was concerned but a great success as to pleasure.

The evenings on the ranch were spent in telling stories of the earlier days. One of the favorites was the affair of the county records.

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It seemed that Cooperstown and Hope both wanted the county seat. They had an election to decide. As there was a railroad crew up at that time they all voted for Cooperstown. Some of the men changed suits and voted twice. The conditions were the same in Hope only their railroad crew wasn't as large as ours and their population a little less, so Cooperstown won by a large majority.

However, Hope was not satisfied so four armed men, Allen Pinkerton, Eleck Glass, William Glass, and John Houghton were stationed to guard the records.

They slept by the records with their guns at their sides. However, in the middle of the night the representatives of Hope came in and held the men at the point of the gun while others took the records. Of course this was a great disappointment to the inhabitants of Cooperstown but they were undaunted. So a few days later they went after and secured the precious records.

There was great rejoicing in Cooperstown and great anger in Hope. Thus it was decided best to extend Steele County to take in Hope and take a few tiers off Trail to extend Griggs.

In 1887 Charles Houghton filed on a homestead, four miles east and one mile south of Cooperstown. In Cooperstown township he took up a fourth of section 32 and range 146, 49 and in Bald Hill township he took up a fourth of section five. He had to swear in an affidavit before the Notary Public. They were allowed three quarters of land.

At the time you claimed up your land you had to have lived on it a few months a year for five years and have a shanty, a barn and a well on the land.

On March 3, 1892 Charles was Married to Alberta Langford at her home. Cora, Milton, Kenneth and Ruth were born to them. Kenneth died at the age of two years.

In 1907 Charles Houghton with his family moved to Cooperstown where he has served on the Board of Education and Alderman.

Cora Houghton--Mrs. James Hazard
Cooperstown,
North Dakota

Milton T. Houghton
San Francisco
California

Ruth A. Houghton
Cooperstown
North Dakota