

JOHN HERBERT LANGFORD

John Herbert Langford was born in Ontario, Canada, Aug. 27, 1871. His parents, Hannah and Samuel Langford were born in England. In the Langford family history, Baron or Lord Langford traces the line back to Edward the Second.

The pioneer's father and oldest brother, Samuel, came to Dakota from Michigan in the spring of 1881, and Mr. Langford filed on a pre-emption in what is now Sverdrup township. The brother soon went to work for Mr. R.C. Cooper, thus helping in a financial way. Mr. Langford walked to Valley City that spring and bought a team of oxen. They were not broke and he had quite a time driving them home, fifty miles, often wading in water to his waist.

^{During} the summer of 1881, Samuel Langford, Sr. hauled lumber from Sanborn and built a house 14' by 20'. He put in double sash windows with glass panes 10'' by 8''. Many of the shanties on the prairie did not have glass panes. Mr. Langford did the required amount of breaking that summer and was ready to seed some grain the following spring.

In August 1881 Mrs. Langford brought the rest of the family—eight children—to join her husband and oldest son. The pioneer of the story was then ten years old and well remembers with a thrill the long trip. They came from St. Clair, Mich. to Duluth, by boat, and from Duluth to Sanborn by train. With them Mrs. Langford brought their household goods to furnish the shanty; also a thoroughbred short horn cow; the same strain has been kept on the farm during all these years. She also brought about twenty chickens.

At Sanborn the father met them and into the two wagons was loaded the family, household goods and chickens;. With the cow tied on behind, they started on what seemed to them a long journey. They went as far as the present Rogers, and when night came, they turned the oxen loose, and made their beds under the wagons. The next they drove to

Bald Hill Creek. At night they had to build a good fire to drive the mosquitos away. The following day they reached their new prairie home.

During that summer the pioneer made many trips to Sanborn with his father and drove a team of oxen to haul the lumber to build the buildings on the ^{George} Bernard homestead--near their own. Many a night they slept under the wagons while the coyotes howled. They often saw antelopes in large herds on the prairie.

The first winter in Dakota was very warm. Some ^{wheat} ~~seed~~ was seeded in February. The first part of March 1882 snow came and they saw their first real Dakota blizzard. The snow stayed until the middle of April. For a few years following this period it was called the "dry spell of the eighties". Many of the new settlers became discouraged and left, some returning to the eastern states. Most of the settlers had faith in the new country and stayed.

The farm machinery was very crude; it consisted of a walking plow, a harrow and a wagon. The first seed was seeded by hand and harrowed in. The nights were cool in those days and the lakes were filled with water; this caused heavy dews so they had some crops and the quality of the grain was good.

The winter blizzards usually lasted three days. The afternoon of the third day the sun would come out, the wind ^{would} go down and the settlers could venture out to feed their stock. One day ~~after~~ ^{after} a storm, Mr. Langford not being able to see, ~~in the storm~~, while going out to do the chores, realized he was on top of his little barn. The barn, as most of the early barns, was made of poles, banked on the sides. Over the poles on top, it was covered with straw.

The cow went dry the first winter so the only milk they

had was given to them by a neighbor, J.N.Brown. The milk was set in pans, and when the cream was skimmed off, it was frozen and brought home in blocks.

Although the houses were small, there was always room for one more. No shanty was too crowded to house a stranger. The social affairs were not society gatherings. Every one welcomed a neighbor and each felt on an equal ^{footing} with the other. The latch string was always out.

In the fall the settlers went to Sanborn for their winter supply of provisions. The kinds of meat bought were salt pork or corned beef. Very few could afford to buy butter, so syrup was used. Just the necessary things were bought, and there was no assurance that ~~the~~ ^{another} trip could be made during the winter.

The first schoolhouse built in ~~Swerdrup~~ ^{Greenendale Sch. dist.} township was built on what is now Sec. 31 (This school district ~~was~~ ^{was} then nine miles square). Later this schoolhouse was moved to the southeast quarter of Sec. 6 of what is now Swerdrup township and is known as the Langford School. The pioneer, and all his sisters and brothers, got their education in this school. Later, three of the pioneer's children attended this school and still later, his grandchildren attended this same school. one ⁽¹⁹³⁶⁾ teen. This last summer it was repaired, repainted and is in quite good condition.

The first English church was a tent, furnished by R.C.Cooper. Rev. Rockwell of the Congregational denomination, was the preacher. Later services were held in the Cooper home. When Cooperstown was started, the Congregational Church was the first church built.

Samuel Langford, Sr. was a practicing veterinary, so the pioneer J.H.Langford, with the advice of his father, took charge of the farm. These were hard times. Farmers found it necessary to buy machinery and the machinery dealers ~~were~~ ^{were} anxious about the future

welfare of the farmers ^{sold} ~~to sell~~ to them on time. Store bills mounted up; things were bought and too easily charged and when fall came, most of the bills could not be paid. Interest was added to the bills that could not be met and the pioneer well remembers when he dreaded to see a top buggy drive into his yard, as he feared it would be a collector, as few other people could afford a top buggy in those times.

However, about this time the farmers broke up more land. Frequent rains were plentiful. Times begin to improve. People found the shanty too small so they built better homes. They planted trees and made plans to beautify the homesteads. The big steam threshing machine soon became a necessity and six o'clock heard the whistle of the old steam engine calling the men to work. Horse teams took the place of the oxen. Elevators were being built to handle the grain from the west. In 1891 there was a wonderful crop. Those ^{who} ~~who~~ were fortunate ^{enough} ~~to~~ ^{to get} their grain all threshed in the fall ^{had} ~~had~~ field yields ~~of~~ ^{of} fifty bushels to the acre; but there were not enough threshing machines in the country for such a "bumper" crop. Mr. Langford tells of threshing all fall with Fred William's machine. The snow came early and it was very cold; they threshed when they had to take the outside from the shock and thresh the inside of the shock, as the snow made the outside too wet. On Thanksgiving Day it was 40 degrees below zero. Then they threshed that day on the Zimmerman farm, Mrs. Zimmerman gave the men a grand turkey dinner when they came in at night. After the dinner was over and the dishes washed they took the tables outside and the men spread their blankets on the floor as it was too cold for them to sleep in the straw stack, as was the custom in those days.

Most of the pioneers liked to hunt. To the pioneer, J.H. Langford, it was fun to bring home all the geese he could carry. The drumming of the prairie chickens was music to him in the spring.

On December 5, 1901 John Herbert Langford married Bortha Sansburn of St. Marys, Ontario, Canada. They were married at the home of her mother in Breckenridge, Minn. by the Rev. A.J. Lidstone of the M.E. church. To them has been born three children, Nellie (Mrs. L.C. Clausen of Minot, N.D.) Gladys, (Mrs. K.M. Curtis of Karnak, N.D.) and John G. Langford of Grand Forks. They have five grand children.

J.H. Langford is one of a family of ten children; his two brothers, Samuel and Alfred live on the same section as himself, namely on Sec. 6 of Sverdrup Tp. Mrs. Kuhns of Honolulu, Mrs. Bertie Houghton of Cooperstown, Mrs. Edwin Burling of New York city, Mrs. R.L. Jones of California, Mrs. H.J. Zellar of Lisbon, N.D. Mrs. James Gimblet, deceased; and Mrs. W.P. Houghton, deceased, are his sisters. The youngest sister is the only member of the family born in North Dakota.

The pioneer (J.H. Langford) has in the course of half a century watched this country grow from the unorganized district to the organized county. He has seen the shanty replaced by the modern home, the prairie trail converted into a highway, the team replaced by automobile. Schoolhouses and churches are dotted all through the county, and through it all he has tried to do his share in the upbuilding of his community. Mr. Langford has served a number of years on the local school board. He is connected with the Farmers Elevator Co., the Griggs County Sentinel-Courier and the Griggs County Mutual Fire Insurance Co. Mr. Langford was elected to the State Legislature in 1934 and re-elected in 1936.

Bibliography: Mrs. J.H. Langford, the wife of the pioneer
Cooperstown, N.D.

Mr. John H. Langford, pioneer
Cooperstown, N.D.

Additional Data on life of J.M.Langford

Among the pioneer's nearby neighbors who came to Griggs County between the years of 1880-1883 were Mr. and Mrs. J.M. Brown, Mr. and Mrs. George Barnard, Simon Ouren and Fred Williams.

The first land the pioneer owned, he bought from R.C. Cooper. It was the N $\frac{1}{2}$ of the W. $\frac{1}{2}$ of Sec. 31 in Washburn Tp. He bought this for \$8 an acre on crop payments. The third year he owned it and had paid for it himself, having given half of the shares to his father for the use of the horses, machinery and seed. The next land he bought was in 1906. This was in Sverdrup Tp. ~~---a $\frac{1}{2}$ ---~~ a $\frac{1}{2}$ sec. on Sec. 5. He bought this land from J.M. Brown for \$22.50, cash payment. In 1917 he bought the home-stead quarter on Sec. 6 from his mother for cash payment, at \$50.00 an acre. This was the peak price for land at that time.

One of the first ~~ann--~~ celebrations which became an annual affair was the picnic at Lake Jessie, in 1887. This was held in a beautiful grove owned by the late W.T. McCulloch at Lake Jessie. This picnic in later years was called "The Old Settlers' Picnic". A hall was built in 1892, was used for programs and entertainments. People came for miles, some by oxen team, some by horse and wagon and some on horse back. They came, one and all, to have the one day of the year to see the friends that they might not see for another year.

One small source of income for the pioneers was the state ^{Gr C.} bounty on gophers. Mr. Langford states that when a young man plowing in the field, he would have many traps set for the gophers. Only the tails were saved and sometimes the tails were found on the collection plates in church as each tail was equivalent to three cents.

Another source of income was the buffalo bones which were sold by the ton. Many settlers went to the Lake Jessie territory and spent the day gathering buffalo bones. At first, they could find them everywhere on the prairie. Large quantities were found in ravines.

Bibliography: J.H. Langford, pioneer
Cooperstown, N.D.