

SASKATCHEWAN ARCHIVES QUESTIONNAIRES

No. 2

PIONEER EXPERIENCES: A GENERAL QUESTIONNAIRE

A word of explanation to the person
answering this questionnaire

1906

Struan

It is difficult to prepare a general questionnaire on pioneer life because no individual who is asked to answer it has exactly the same experiences as another. Some of the questions here will not apply to your experiences; others may prove impossible for you to answer, so don't worry about leaving blank spaces. Use extra sheets of paper if there is not sufficient space to answer the questions. Don't hesitate to give details, or describe particular events, if they help to answer the questions.

This questionnaire is intended for persons who lived in Western Canada before 1914, and may be answered by anyone who has personal experience of the pioneer years whether born in this province or not.

If more than one member of the family can answer the questions, they should write them on separate sheets or apply for a separate questionnaire.

Other Questionnaires

Saskatchewan Archives Questionnaire No. 1, entitled "Pioneer Diet: What Did Western Canadian Pioneers Eat?" is still being circulated. If you have not already answered this, and would be willing to do so, please put a check mark here () and one will be sent to you.

Saskatchewan Archives questionnaires on other subjects will be prepared at a later date. Some of these are listed below. Please mark the ones you would be willing to answer.

- () All questionnaires
- () Pioneer health conditions
- () Pioneer social life, sports and recreation
- () Pioneer housing
- () Pioneer education and churchwork
- () Pioneer farming experience

Preservation of Questionnaires

All questionnaires will be preserved in the Saskatchewan Archives Board's Office at the University of Saskatchewan as part of the permanent record of our Province. Please send your completed questionnaire to:

Saskatchewan Archives Office,
University of Saskatchewan,
Saskatoon, Sask.

*Sorry this was mislaid in a drawer
or I would have completed it sooner.*



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NOTE: Please print all proper names and place names in capital letters. If you are not sure the name is correct as you have given it, please say so. If you'd rather have someone else do the writing at your dictation, this is quite acceptable.

1. Your full name ROBERT MILLS

2. Your address STRUAN

3. Date 1st Sept 1954

4. Where were you born? (Give name of place and country)

Dumfries Scotland 16 Feb. 1885.

5. What was your father's name and occupation?

ROBERT MILLS. Private Attendant.

6. When did you come to Saskatchewan? (Give month and year)

April. 1906

7. Mention any other places where you lived before coming to Saskatchewan, giving dates wherever possible.

Ecclefechan Scotland ~~1895~~ -1895-1900

ANNAN. Scotland 1900-1903

BLOEMFONTIEN South AFRICA 1903-1904.

8. How old were you when you first came to Western Canada? (You do not need to answer this question if you would rather not or you may use "I was a small child", "I was in my teens", etc).

20 years.

9. What were your reasons for coming West?

I think just a natural desire to see other places and the homestead bug.

10. How did you learn about the West? (Through other people? Reading about it? Railroad or government information?).

It may seem strange but a young fellow & I working on the Central South African Railroad at Bloemfontein did not like conditions there so we decided to try Canada. We wrote Canada House England to get pamphlets and maps sent us. As we sat in our tent at night we studied the maps and settled on a place where there seemed to be a few creeks one of them the Beaver. That creek runs through my yard today. Although by the time I homesteaded I had forgotten all about our African decision.



11. What did your friends and relatives think of your decision to come to Western Canada?

They figured by then I could look after myself.

12. Did you travel by yourself or with a party (family, friends or other group?).

With my African acquaintance Geo. Hart who came from Kent England.

13. What means of transportation did you use?

Left Liverpool March 21. 1905 on board C.P.R. S.S. Lake Champlain. From St John. N.B. to Winnipeg by C.P. emigrant train. 5 days no sleeper berths.

14. What incidents of the journey West do you remember? (People you met on the way, meetings with Indians, adventures on the journey, accidents or other excitement etc.).

Boat trip was exceptionally stormy got my head split by nearly being washed overboard. Poor food bad accomodation for low fare. Strange money. Lived on Bread & honey all of the journey by train until we got to Winnipeg.

15. Where did you first stay when you arrived in Saskatchewan?

In Saskatoon

16. Where did you settle or take up land?

NW $\frac{1}{4}$ Sec. 10. T. 39. R. 12. W. 3.

17. Mention any other places where you have lived since coming to Saskatchewan.

No other place.

18. How did you earn a living before coming to Western Canada? How after you came?

Trained as Booking clerk also express & telegraph clerk on Caledonian Rly. 4 years. Also one years service as express clerk in South Africa. On farm ever since except during winter of 1906-7 I worked on C.N. Snow plow from Saskatoon to Regina

19. How often did you write to relatives or friends in your old home?

at least once per month.

20. If you got married, give the name of your husband or wife along with the date and place of marriage.

Wife Miss Hannah Clark Carlisle
Eng.

Married at Saskatoon 9 May 1919.

21. Did anyone else come to Saskatchewan because of your recommending it as a place to settle?

My brother came out to meet me and go homesteading in April 1906.

22. If other members of your family (brothers, sisters, parents, etc.) came West tell when they came and where they settled.

Brother on farm about one mile from me.

23. Is there any particular experience of pioneer days that stands out in your memory which you would like to record?

On 15 Aug 1906 a severe storm followed by a baby cyclone took the roof off the log shack. Lightning struck the stove pipe then drenched us with a cloud burst 100 lbs of flour, Rolled Oats and sugar were a total loss. our new wagon box was picked up carried over some willows & smashed. Haystack and our washing disappeared 12 in of water on the floor.

24. Did you travel about much in the early years? (for business, attending church, visiting friends, etc.) How often? How far? By what means of travel?

Mostly on foot then by oxwagon and horse and buggy. Sometimes walked 10 miles to a dance. On 24 May 07 went to a picnic. Came home and fought prairie fire all night & part of next day.

25. When was the first car used in the community?

Don't remember

26. If you owned a car before 1914, when did you buy it? What make?

Bought my first car 1925. Old Ford.

27. Where was your trading center? How far from your home?

Langham. 35 miles.

28. Did you continue to trade there? (Indicate any changes due to new towns appearing, better means of travel, etc.).

Yes until 1908 when the steel came to Perdue. 25 miles. In winter we could get across the North Saskatchewan to Radisson and Fielding.

29. How often did you shop in the early days?

Twice per year.

30. When (if ever) did people in your district first start going to town regularly on Saturdays?

Not till 1927 when railroad came through this territory.

31. When (if ever) did you first begin to buy through the mail order catalogues? What kind of articles did you buy in this way? Indicate also what fraction of your total purchases were by mail order and any changes in the proportion of purchases made by mail order since the beginning of the period.

I spent the year of 1905 summer & winter in Manitoba getting farm experience. The farm mistress sent to T. Eatons of Winnipeg for my winter outfit. Since then we have dealt with the same firm continually for a portion of our clothing may be 50%.

32. When did you first have a telephone and what company provided it?

The Perdue Rural Line was built in 1915.

33. When you came to Saskatchewan the first time was it with the idea of staying permanently? Or did you make up your mind after trying it out? When did you make this decision?

Yes. I intended to stay & though it was hard at times I am still here.

My friend Geo. Hart left after he proved up and went to work for the C. P. R.

34. Did any people move away from your district prior to 1914? What reasons did they have for moving?

I think only two families because of the severe winter. One went back home to Belgium the other to B. C.

35. Did many people move away during the 1930's? Did many return?

None.

36. If you or some member of your family have held public office, or have been active in any organizations, mention it here, giving dates wherever possible.

I have acted as school trustee, chairman of board & secy Treas. Auditor for phone company I have been secy of Wheat Pool committee here for 27 years. Also have been Chairman & secy for pic-nic association.

37. If you or any of your family or friends were "first" to have or do something in the district mention it here giving dates wherever possible. (Such as owning the first automobile, combine, organizing the first lodge, etc.).

The only thing I can think of is my brother and I made the first log float to crush down the sod after breaking. Later they were made with 12 in planks. We had seen the same things used at home

38. How did the places in your community get their names? (School districts, Post Offices, villages, railway stations, creeks, hills, etc.). Try to give: (1) name and occupation of person suggesting place-name (2) origin and meaning of the name (3) date of its adoption (4) any changes in names since the first name was given date and reason for change. Give facts of new name as above in (1) & (2), (3).

Our school here is named "Bellevant" I am told it is named after a Belgian settler who came here first & used to run a sheep ranch.

The town & post office were named by our first ministers wife who came from Struan Scotland & kept the first post office here.

39. Questions regarding historical source materials:

Do you have in your possession or do you know the whereabouts of diaries, old letters, old poster and programs, minute books of community organizations, old pamphlets, old photographs, written recollections and reminiscences? (Describe).

Our Sonningdale picnic association which has run continually since 1907 must have old minute books that may be interesting write to. H. R. Ferguson Sonningdale P.O. he was first Secy & was for years
Would you or the person who owns them either

- (1) be willing to lend them to the Provincial Archivist for copying?
- (2) be willing to present them to the Archives Division of the Legislative Library, Regina, or the Archives Office at the University in Saskatoon?.....
(indicate your preference, if any)

40. If you have children or grandchildren, please give their names, where they live and occupations.

Robert Mills Jr. Struan P.O. Farmer. (one son Gary)
Alan. Mills. Saskatoon. works with Intercontinental Packers
(one son Wayne)

41. What do you think are the most important changes in your community since you first came West?

Better roads. Telephone. Radio. Car transportation. Wheat Pool then Wheat Board which put more money into farmers hands. Later methods of cultivation and harvesting have all contributed to making life more pleasant both for man & woman

Please give the names and addresses of other pioneers who could answer this questionnaire.

As I am one of three left who first settled here I don't think you can get any different information from them

If someone else has filled in this questionnaire for you, please have this person give name and address here:

