

Autobiography of John Heffernan

Attached to in this tree



John Heffernan
1858 - 1942

Autobiography of John Heffernan

John Heffernan was the son of Michael Heffernan & Mary Curtin. The document ends about 1940 and it appears that he died in 1942.

I was born in Indian River, Ontario, Canada, on December 29th, 1858. My father was born near Peterborough, Canada, of Irish descent, and was 75 years old when he died. My mother was born in Ireland and was eighty years old when she died. My father always farmed, and I have always had farm or ranching interests. I attended school at Peterborough, Ontario, Canada. I was good in arithmetic and strong on athletics. I never drank liquor, and we never had liquor in the house, except to use as medicine.

Our home farm was originally one hundred acres of rolling land covered with hard maple, beech, oak pine, cedar, poplar, elm basswood and ironwood. The best soil was from maple clearings. Our first house was one room with one window and one door, and the roof was made from hollowed or grooved logs covered by moss. We had a fireplace in the room for all cooking and heating. We used a crane for cook. Later, Father built a four-room log house with attic and shingle roof. We had a log barn with shingle roof, and we had a calf house with wood hinges on the door. We had a six foot deep well of good water and used a well wheel, rope and bucket. Father helped clear timber from four separate farms in his lifetime. We had about twenty sheep, milked about four cows, and had hogs, chickens, geese and turkeys, I remember that sister and I would walk barefoot six miles to a store, carrying a basket of eggs between us to trade same for sugar. I won first prize on a high kick of 9 feet 2 inches at school contest, and was good on hurdle, foot races, wrestling and boxing. I liked all kinds of livestock, and fed lambs with a spoon, and wrapped up calves, brought them into the house and fed them there in very cold weather. I drove oxen, also rode and drove horses.

I hated to leave my home and folks, but I wanted to see the West. Therefore, I left home March 28, 1881, for Detroit, Michigan. When I left home I told my folks, "I'll show the world what a laboring man can do." I found a job at once in Detroit, at St. Mary's Hospital, in their garden and dairy, and worked there five months, first at \$9 a month. Then I was raised to \$11, and when I told them I was going west they offered me \$20 a month to remain. But they were good to me when I left, as they put up a big lunch for me and I carried it in my suitcase. I met a man called Ed Roberts, on the boat and he was headed west. That big lunch was our main feed all the way to Glendive, Montana. The boat fare to Duluth was \$7. I had \$22.50 when I left Detroit, and the "fifty cents was given me by my mother as I was leaving home, for a memory keepsake. The name of the steam boat was "China,"

When we got to Duluth, we found that we could get free fare on the Northern Pacific Railway to Glendive, Montana, if we would agree to work on the building of the railway which was headed for the Pacific Ocean. So, we took the free fare and reached Glendive at 5 P.N. on September 9th, 1881, with \$22.50 in my pockets. By the way, I recall a bog storm while on the "China," and I laid on the floor with my grip as my pillow and slept, so I must have been tired. We crossed the Missouri River at Bismarck on a railway ferry, same as at Detroit.

I at once hired out to work for John Lind, a contractor, digging wells for the N. P. Railway. I was paid \$2 a day with overtime; I got in thirty-three days a month. I paid \$4.50 a week for board at the cook camp, but I had to rustle my own bed about as follows: cut willows for a bed spring, and used a gunny sack full of hay for a pillow, with army blankets for covering. I had only to take off my boots and I was ready for bed. I often left on my coon-skin cap and mittens. I had this job until April 1st, 1882.

After that I went trapping at or near Buffalo Rapids for about a month. I had no tent and made my bed as before, from out willows. I got along nicely without any chamber maids to care for the beds. I remember catching a jack rabbit and how good it tasted.

I went to Glendive about May 1st, and met Mr. Levering (who had lost an arm) and hired out to him to go to the Black Hills with him for a band of sheep he had bought, and wanted to range them along the Yellowstone northeast of Glendive. We drove back with two yoke of oxen, saddle horses and one dog, eight hundred head of sheep. On our way to the Black Hills, I shot my first buffalo. Coming back from the Black Hills, we had to build bridges to cross many streams where the land was flat and the soil was gumbo and alkali, which was often so full of water that the sheep could not cross, unless we had a road and bridge for them. I had an axe to use in cutting timber along the trail, and we would haul the logs by oxen or saddle pony to where we wanted to cross over the stream with the sheep, and if necessary as it was often we would cut a lot of willows for approaches. Mr. Levering had promised his mother to be home August first, and he left me so as to keep his promise. I reached Glendive with the sheep on August 2, 1882, and had a loss of only four, and one of these was by a rattle-snake bite.

After delivering these sheep to the "Bonnie Pierre" ranch on the lower Yellowstone, then I went to Fort Buford and hired out to work for Major Crampton, who had bought that band of sheep on the above

ranch, and stayed with him and them until April, 1883. He had been a doctor to Sitting Bull, and he furnished me with a pony which he got from Sitting Bull. He paid me \$40 a month, room and board, with rifle and ammunition, and I also had all I could make from selling deer hides at seventy-five cents each. Once in the spring of 1883 when I was crossing the Yellowstone, the ice began breaking up and it was the closest call to death I ever had on the river. When the ice was out of the river, and I had to go to Newlon P.O. for the mail, we had what was called a "tub-boat" to use crossing from one side to the other. My pony was put in the boat and braced his four feet in the four corners of the boat which steadied him and the boat also. We would tie the boat to the shore, ride up to the post office, get the mail and return across the river in the same manner. I recollect I had a rowboat for myself to row and pull this tub-boat also. When I had finished working for Major Crampton, he paid me \$400 in silver. I put it in my socks to carry in various pockets, as it weighed about sixteen pounds.

When going up the Yellowstone to the John Scott ranch, which was the "half-way house" between Fort Buford and Glendive, I stayed my first night at O'Brien's ranch close to Newlon post office. I had to bunk with a stranger, and unloaded clothes and silver on a chair and the floor for the night. The next morning, April 2, 1883, I had breakfast and walked twelve miles to Scott's ranch. My feet were wet and cold from snow on the trail, and Scott warmed them in the stove oven. He had to be away about two weeks on jury duty, and he asked me if I could milk, clean out the barns, wean calves, drive oxen, break branches, and do all kinds of farm work. I said "yes, sir" to each and every question. I was hired summer, and I promised Scott to care for his ranch and family of wife and four children while he was away. As he left for jury duty, I said, "I will be here when you come back, dead or alive."

Scott also kept a regular stopping-place on the Glendive-Buford trail. While Scott was in Glendive, three men put up there overnight one time. They had a bunch of horses of about seventy-five in all. The next morning they sent two men on their way to Glendive with one of their own party and a man by the name of Tom Allen that was at the half-way house at that time. When they got about a mile and half southwest of Scott's place, we heard shooting and we thought they had jumped up a deer and was at it, but in a little while we saw a man on horse back running toward us, and when he was close to us, I saw one of the posse get down on his knee and shoot at him, shooting so close the man, Allen, took his coat off and we looked him all over and told him he was not hit. Mrs. Scott and all the children and the rest of us was looking for the bullet. We heard it whiz by at the time, and I thought it was not right to shoot toward the house as the people that was outside, this woman and children were innocent, regardless of us. They captured a man by the name of Billie Watson and sent him to the house with orders for us to come out with our hands up. When I heard that I picked up Scott's rifle and took charge of the situation all at once. I said, "Boys, if you are going to make a fight, you make it from the barn or go and give yourself up. You can't make a fight from here on account of the family." They talked it over among themselves and agreed to go. A.A. Austill, a man who was stopping there at the time, went with them, and the posse asked them who that man was that was walking around outside with a gun in his hand. Austill told them that he was the hired man, and said he promised Scott to take care of his family until he came, back from Glendive. They told Bill Watson to go in and tell me to come right out, "or we will go in and take him out. Watson came and delivered the message. He was half negro but at that he was as white as I was, and I was considered very fair at that. I said, "No I am not going to leave this family, or even am I going to get out of sight. I will be out around here and they can have the first shot, and you tell them to be sure they get me, or I sure will get them." I was the best shot with a rifle at short range on the lower Yellowstone River at that time: I could beat any soldier I ever shot with. I finally asked Watson, "By the way, who are they out there?" And he said they were a sheriff's posse from Miles City. I took off my belt and set my gun to one side and told Watson to go back and tell them to come. They had nothing to fear here, and they came in and stayed overnight, and the next morning they took the horses and men to Miles City and that was the last time I heard of them. When Scott came back from jury duty in Glendive, I was there: very much alive "

I stayed with Scott till the fall of '83 when I went to work for George McCone, and I worked for him all the winter of 1883-1884. The firm was McCone & Williams, but George was the boss. McCone County, Montana was named for him. I had to ride the range for them all that winter, and I called it "starting at the mouth of the mouth of the Yellowstone near Fort Duford, thence to the North Pole and around back to Glendive and down to Buford again." I got mighty hungry and cold on that job. Once in a crowd of friends, George told them that he had the only range between Lower Yellowstone and the North Pole. He called for me and told them that I saved his cattle that winter, as most of the small herds were lost and died from starvation in snow storms. He said to me, "John, you were a million dollar man then." I replied, "George, I am a million dollar man yet." I had saved two-thirds of his bunch while others lost 100% of theirs. I had only two cow ponies for all this work while other outfits had less cattle and from five to seven ponies, and lost all.

In the spring of 1884, I went back to work for Scott's Ranch and was there all summer. This was also called the "half-way" between Glendive and Fort Buford. The mail stage usually stopped here overnight, and the corrals and barns were usually filled with teams and wagons going in both directions. We crossed the Missouri River a short distance west of the mouth of the Yellowstone just south of the old town of Mondak, and thence east two miles to Fort Buford.

In the summer of 1884, Major Whipple of the U. S. Army (a son of Bishop Whipple of Minnesota) was on his way from Glendive to Fort Buford, as paymaster of the U.S. Army, with the usual escort. Between twelve and fifteen miles south of Scott's place he was held up by a gang of rustlers. Usually the ambulance wagon preceded the escort wagon, and the money chest was carried in the escort wagon. But this trip the money chest was carried in the ambulance wagon. Both wagons were drawn by four mules to each. The bandits knew the usual procedure and allowed the ambulance wagon to pass on without molestation. By the way, at the place where this holdup occurred, the old U. S. Government trail came up from a flat through the hills to the prairie above it, and the bandits had picked a good place to hide, close to the trail. When the bandits found that the money chest was not in the escort wagon, they broke up all the rifles and guns on the wagon wheels and then took after the

ambulance shooting as they came. In the beginning, first sergeant Coonrod in the ambulance wagon began the shooting, but he only shot once, as he had two bullets in his left side below the shoulder and he died that day. The driver of the ambulance wagon was hit on the forehead and stunned by a glancing bullet. Major Whipple jumped out of the ambulance wagon as soon as the shooting commenced, but when he saw that his driver was knocked out, he jumped back and took the lines. One of the mules had a bullet hit his rump and run alongside his back, and how he did run after that! The bandits knew if they could kill the mules, they had the money chest in their hands. One man in the escort wagon was hit in the arm by a bullet. I was at Scott's when Major Whipple drove up in the ambulance wagon. Both wagons was full of holes where the bullets had gone through from the bandits' rifles. Major Whipple at once sent a man named Sims, driver of the escort wagon, on horseback to Fort Buford for a guard escort. The next morning about daybreak Capt. Bell and a cavalry escort was at Scott's Ranch. I remember distinctly that Capt. Bell came up to me and, as I had on a U. S. sergeant coat, he naturally thought I was one of Major Whipple's escort. I also had a rifle in my hand. I said "good morning," but never gave a salute as a soldier, as I did not know what a salute was. He replied, "good morning." By the way, to explain the above, that night Mr. Scott, A.A. Austill and myself acted as night guards or sentries for that money chest. I had put on the sergeant's coat to keep me warm. Before Major Whipple left the Scott ranch for Fort Buford the next morning, escorted by Capt. Bell and the cavalry, he gave me a \$2.50 gold piece and said "I will see that the government rewards you," to which I replied, "I don't expect any reward, as I have only done what any citizen of the U.S.A. should do."

Later in 1884 I went to work for Johnnie O'Brien who had a ranch twelve miles northeast of Scott's near the Newlon post office. In the fall of 1884 I went to work a teamster for Leighton, Jordan, & Hedderich, who had the post trader's store at Port Buford, and was with them about two years. In 1885 Leighton, Jordan & Hedderich bought two white face registered bulls at Glendive costing \$250.00 each. I was given the job of driving these two bulls from Glendive to Fort Buford. It was three days coming the 78 miles from Glendive to Fort Buford. It was so hot in the middle of the day that I did not do any driving then, but drove all night and rested in the middle of the day. There was only one rain that entire season and not feed along the highway.

Later that year I was sent by Leighton, Jordan & Hedderich to the Mathew ranch in Little Muddy post office. I had been made a deputy sheriff by Alex McKenzie, and I had to foreclose for Leighton, Jordan & Hedderich a chattel mortgage they held for \$18,000 covering all horses, cattle, machinery and personal property of every kind on the ranch. It was in the summer of 1886. At that time there was not U.S. survey here, and hence not deed or mortgage on real estate could be given. I remained as manager of the Mathew ranch for Leighton, Jordan & Hedderich until the summer of 1887.

In the work I had for Leighton, Jordan & Hedderich I often drove George W. Hedderich who was the actual manager of all their business from Fort Buford to the Mathews ranch at Little Muddy post office. On one trip when we arrived at the ranch, the barroom was pretty well filled, and among them was a big bum who had been ordered to leave Fort Buford Reservation because of vicious his disposition. He had accused George W. Hedderich of being the man who had him out of the reservation. Evidently when we entered the barroom, George W. Hedderich saw him among the crowd and at once knew there would be trouble if he remained in sight, so he went to his room and stayed there.

This big bum named Hennessy picked on me because he saw me come in with Geo. W. Hedderich and knew I was working for him. At that time I knew none of them personally in the barroom, and had said nothing to anyone. I figured the crowd as being what we called "wood-hawks" which means men along the Missouri River who cut wood for sale to steamboats running up and down the river. Later I learned that some present that day in the barroom were well known in the future life of this part of the northwest. Among them was Charlie Baldwin, Charlie Shafer, Gee. W. Newton, Chas. Gibbs and Arthur Mahoney.

The big bum referred to, put his hat on my head and I had to look up to see his face as he was much taller than I was and I said, "I am a pretty good looking man with a man's hat on." He said to me, "You ---, I have a good notion to hit you," and I have always admired him for telling the truth, for he did hit me -so hard that he broke my nose, and knocked me across the barroom. But I came back and he soon cried "enough." I barked him every time I hit him. I thought everything was settled when he cried "enough," but after a little while he came up behind me and grabbed me around the neck with both hands and choked me. I broke his hold and threw him down and sat on him. I told him, "I should kill you now after what you have done to me, and I have never had one word with you." Then I let him up and that was his finish with me.

One of the other men there, Charley Bradley, who knew me from Buford then said, "Heffernan can lick any man in the house," and Arthur Mahoney, a small Irishman present, took off his coat and said, "I'll take him on." Charlie Shafer, his partner, grabbed him and said, "No you won't, unless you take me on first. He should have killed that big bum." Then they both sat down.

In the fall of 1885, I had orders from Geo. W. Hedderich to go that night on horseback with orders to the captain of the steamboat at Grinnell Landing, and the orders must be delivered before daylight as the boats never traveled by night, due to snags in the river. I made seventy miles that night, and had to change horses at the Mathews Ranch, from 9 p.m. to 4 a.m.

One of the hardest winters we ever had was 1886-1887. My first crop as foreman for Leighton, Jordan & Hedderich on the Mathew ranch was put in the spring of 1886. We had about 350 acres in wheat and we harvested 1050 bushels; about 450 acres to flax, and we had none in hay crop that year--It was too dry. Mail was carried from Buford to Grinnell post office by Mickey Egan, a green Irish boy

who was the butt of many jokes. Among them, the boys told him to grease the runners on his sleds the same as the axes on wagons. On his first trip with mail he came back and said he forgot the keys to the mail sacks. I have now a receipt dated Oct. 12, 1886 where I paid Leighton, Jordan & Hedderich "one hundred dollars, delivered to them by M. Egan."

In the spring of 1887, I established my home in Williston, and the town was plotted that year. I bought the first lot where the Heffernan block now stands on Main Street across from the Great Northern Hotel, and built the first log house with shingle roof in the village. The St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway built through here in 1887. It came, it saw, it went. While here they had a tented city down by the present Great Northern Railway depot, and money came and went fast. When the railway contractors left the village as their base of supplies and moved west, the big boom for those days left and went with them.

I came to Williston in 1887 with a horse and buggy, and seven hundred dollars in cash. I financed the "Brunswick Restaurant" which was one of the first in town, and George W. Newton was my partner. This was next to the original depot. We were the last of twelve restaurants to go "broke" and I can with it. I had already bought the corner lot, and then I bought the lot north of the corner and we divided the center lot between us, half and half. My intention then was to build a hotel on the three lots, which are now occupied by the Heffernan block and Joseph's Ready-To-Wear Store.

September 9th, 1887, I started again. I was long on lots and short of cash. I borrowed \$5.00 from "Capt." Bangs to buy a meal ticket. I bought a pair of gloves for seventy-five cents from George Bruegger on time. I bought a team of mules, harness and wagon for three hundred dollars from Fred Rounsaville on time. He was a friend of mine from Lower Yellowstone Valley. He let me use his stable until I built one of my own, which was down near the depot. The stable was made of logs on end, and a dirt roof. The mules had one end of the shed, and I slept on hay with a buffalo robe over me on the other side of the shed. I was awakened next morning by Charlie Baldwin who gave me my first dray order - to take a bunch of groceries down to the Little Muddy Railway bridge, where Charlie and me carried them on foot across the railway bridge, as there was no wagon bridge then across the Little Muddy.

Under date of November 21st, 1938, and from his home in Olympia, Wash., my old friend, Charles Baldwin, wrote me the following which referred to the above incident:

"Reminded me of you the morning I woke you up sleeping between your dray team, two big mules, with about two inches of snow on your buffalo robe which covered you, and about the same amount of snow on the mules' backs. That was in the fall of 1887. I had known you about three years at that time when you were foreman on the Bob Mathews ranch two miles east of Williston. That would be fifty-four years ago, but I thought up until that morning" in 1887 you were just another man, but I see then you were of pure gold, and ever since then, fifty-one years to be exact, I have never known you to lie or cheat. Always paid your bills promptly; your family and hired men could always depend on you to give them charity and good advice. I am speaking now when you were well fixed in worldly goods, with a good business and a nice family. I have often wished I could follow your footsteps. For that fifty-one years you have an inspiration to me. How many others you have been the same to will never be known, but I know it is hundreds. So what more can a man get of this life than would compare with that? So here is hoping you will meet your old pal in the world following this. Yours with all my love to a real MAN!! CHARLES BALDWIN, Olympia, Wash.

Again in a letter dated Jan. 24, 1939, he wrote:

"Dear friend John: I was just thinking all day of you old timers (that is, what is left of the old bunch) what we will do when we all get together up at the Gate. I have been fixing up an alibi if I can put it over on old St. Peter. It will be O. K. for me, but I don't know how we will come out as I think St. Peter has seen our whole card and will question some of our alibis."

From this beginning I developed a business for three drays, one water wagon, and Standard Oil Co. bulk agency. My first barn held six horses, and that grew to a barn of 200 head. The first water works in Williston was pure Missouri River water delivered by me into barrels at the homes. I built the first ice-house, size 14 x 16, then later two others and each larger. The last one was 50 x 30 ft. and 16 ft. high. I had the first livery team in Williston and a democrat wagon for use. My ponies were called "Tom" and "Jerry." This grew to a livery of 28 horses, two hacks and a carload of surreys and buggies. I met all railway passenger trains from 1887 until 1929, when autos beat me at the game. I carried U. S. mail for twenty years between railway depot and the first U.S. post office in Williston, I have my first contract for same dated May 22, 1888. For twenty dollars a month, signed by W. S. Dunn, postmaster, G. B. M. Clerk. I have no regrets because autos beat me as mail carrier, because I had lots and lots of fun in those years from 1887 to 1929, meeting 99 good people to one who was wrong and no good in and out.

Statement - October 31st, 1899, for eight months ending October 31st:

Receipts:

Stable -----	\$1732.15
City Express -	\$464.81
Livery -----	\$581.20
Water -----	\$1256.89
Dray-----	\$383.03
Rents -----	\$41.50
Wood-----	\$78.25
Milk-----	\$93.35

5223.81
 Less expense~ paid \$2286.70
 Total gain \$2937.11
 Gain for November \$507.22

I was married April 20th, 1890 to Eleanor Frances Newell, whose parents lived in town. Her father was a Round House Foreman. They had a family of nine children. My wife was born in Slayton, Minn. on Sept. 1st, 1869. Her mother's maiden name was Mary Frazer, her father's name was Robert Newell, and both were born in Scotland.

We had nine children and I will give you date of birth, name and other dates about them.

Mary Leonorla	born Feb. 4, 1894	died Feb. 15, 1896
John Francis	born Feb. 13, 1891	died June 23, 1937
Marguerite Ethel	born Nov. 20, 1896	married
Helen Hannah	born Sept. 15, 1899	married
Robert Michael,	born Mar. 5, 1901	married
Ernest James	born Feb. 27, 1904	single
William Lawrence	born Sept. 9, 1906	married
Chester Archibald	born Jan. 1, 1909	single
Elmo Newell	born May 21, 1912	single

They were all born in Williston, and their mother died May 21, 1912.

John Francis graduated as a lawyer from Albany, N. Y. Law School in 1912.

Marguerite and Helen graduated from St. Chatherine's College in St. Paul, and both taught school before being married.

Robert had one year in the University of No. Dakota at Grand Forks.

All the children except Elmo finished Williston High School, but Elmo had to leave High School after two years because of poor eyesight.

John Francis enlisted in the Army in 1917 and served in France, with six months after Armistice, doing burial duty as first Lieutenant.

William Lawrence and Chester Archibald graduated from St. Thomas College, St. Paul, and William Lawrence also then spent two years in Seminary. I will show you proper papers verifying some of these statements.

Here is the "official certificate" issued Nov. 8, 1884 as Constable for Newlon Twp. Dawson County, Montana.

Here is the official notice to me as "Deputy Sheriff," to post three separate notices of salt at Mathews Ranch of Mortgage Foreclosure of all personal property, cattle and horses,"except the dwelling house of nine rooms, one copy at Fort Buford, one at GATES, where Charles Schumacher now lives and the third at Little Muddy Post Office, Mathews Ranch.

Here is my statement of all funds handled by mc as County Treasurer for 1899 and 1900.

I was the first sheriff of the County for 1891 and 1892. I was county commissioner four years. I was a member of the School Board about fifteen years.

Here is my U. S. Government patent, filed in Book. A, - Page 8, on June 2nd, 1904 for Lot 4, Section 19-154,100; and N. E. of N. E. of 25-154_101,--77.67 acres.

I homesteaded on 80 acres southeast of the town in early '90's. I began homestead irrigation, and did all the work myself, and made a success of it so long as I had the water to use. I only plowed it one year. I mean I was the boss of all this work, and I dug my own ditching and leveling of the land. I cut hay on about two-thirds of it, and averaged one and one-half tons per acre, on all of it. Sold hay for \$15.00 a ton. Blue Joint hay is natural here. I did have six acres with 18 tons one year, when the Missouri overflowed, then, the entire land for about a week. Phillips had 40 acres east of Little Muddy on which he put up 75 tons of Blue Joint hay. I paid Charlie Gibbs \$150.00 cash for 32 acres in NE of Section 24-154-101 :west of town, one mile; I bought 80 acres and broke all of it with oxen, and leveled it with fine-tooth harrows, and hauled manure from the livery barn, and let it lay on the land two or three years before I put in any crop. Then I plowed from six to eight inches deep, and put in wheat and had a poor crop of about 150 bushels from 80 acres, and the reason for that was that I turned up on top, too much dead soil. By doing that I made a reservoir so as the thing might hold water for next year. The next year I plowed it light and harrowed with fine-tooth harrow, and packed it good which kept it from blowing. On some of that crop year I got 40 bushels of wheat, and "where I had too much manure, I got only 22 bushels and all #1 Scotch Fife Hard Wheat. The third year I got 101 bushels of 44 lb. oats. I paid \$500.00 for the quarter and sold it for \$4500.00 and no buildings on it, but always kept it well fenced, and only one mile from town. At one time I had 1300 acres of cattle ranch land, and 300 acres tillable. I had 150 head of cattle and 125 head of horses. I sold 92 horses for over \$8200 cash net, clear to me. I sold 100 head of Aberdeen Angus for \$7250.00 cash, net to me.

Dry Farming I have learned from these many years of varied experiments as I have outlined herein, that the aboriginal Indian was nearly right when he looked at a homesteader breaking the sod and he said, "he is turning that wrong side up. No good." When we opened this country to homesteaders, all of us used oxen for horses for work and spread their manure on the land. We got one cow for our family use. No tin can cows in those days. We and they spread their manure on the land instead of spreading tin cans. We had a garden for our own food, and always put manure on the garden and always got some garden truck for our family use. Today we have no manure from our gas machinery to spread on our gardens and farm lands. We then baked our own bread and made our own butter and the eggs from our poultry fed us, and bought groceries in trade.

I know we lived better than most farmers live today, and we had our own self-respected, and never went to county Commissioners for help in any way. We thought it was a treat to go to town once or twice a month in the summertime and possibly once in two or three months during a hard winter. Ranching- Cattle and horses. No man should have less than 320 acres with two cows, a team of horses, a saddle pony, chickens and poultry for eggs to eat, a hog for his pork and lard, and a yearling for his family meat. He could sell eggs and cream or butter in trade for groceries. A garden could produce lots of eats. The least land necessary to graze on head of cattle is ten acres for the summer months. Winter feed must be extra. Horses need more land for grazing than cattle. He should have a mowing machine, a hay rake, a three-horse sulky plow, a fine-tooth harrow and a hand corn-planter, as he will seldom fail to obtain fodder from his corn land.

He must realize that his farm is his bank. All the money he puts back into improvements means big gains in future years. If he will stay on the farm and work, he will soon have it all paid for. But he must forget entirely about the easy way of living through grain crops, as grain crops will break him as it has thousands before him. Also, such land should not be subject to any mortgage so long as the family make it their actual home.

Wintering stock was done mostly at home ranches in sheds cheaply put up from timber growing along the streams. homesteaders began coming in here fast from 1904 to 1910, and it then dropped fast each year.

Taxes should range from \$15.00 to \$25.00 a quarter section. No taxes should apply to improvements. I do believe in our 2% sales tax. I do believe schools should be kept open for all farm children up to the 8th Grade inclusive. Simplify our present printed forms of income tax returns, both state and national, so that the ordinary man whether farmer or rancher, could fill them out at home, without the aid of an attorney. I know that the farmer is hit harder on income taxes than any other line of business.

Instead of bringing this country to our way of farming, we must adapt ourselves to the ways of the country. We have tried to change the climatic conditions of this country to suit our ideas of easy farming, and the least work possible. We should not condemn the country, but condemn ourselves for the foolish ideas we have used in farming and ranching. We have always known this was a dry climate, and some years very dry; we did not provide for it. When we do not conserve our good crops to provide for the lean years, and do not allow our plowed lands to have a rest, we must expect "to go broke." We should only put up hay for one winter, and we should have always put up every ton of hay we could every year, so that in a dry year and a long, hard winter following, we would not lose half or possibly all our cattle and horses. Have crops on only about half our plowed land each year, we should thoroughly summer-fallow on the other half and that Fallow on the other half and that saves moisture for dry years and no one has so far made a decent living out here by the profits on raising wheat only.

We have learned that we: can raise feed crops for our own livestock, and let us keep our surpluses for the lean years. Use the wheat crop as our cash crop only. I have had very little experience in sheep-raising, and have nothing to say about sheep. I do know that I have seen many times where one or two pigs, two or three milking cows, and our poultry really gave us a fine living together with our garden truck. Our groceries cost us very little in "cash." I am not telling all this for the millionaire type farmer, but for the ordinary farmer who wants a home, be independent, and pay his way as he goes. A real citizen of the U.S.A. Our surplus sidewalk farmers, and our congressional farmers are not in my class.

That reminds me that my mother carded the wool and made my socks, mufflers and mittens. My father was a man who never would allow any quarrels around him. He drank very seldom, but whiskey was always in our home as medicine. My father farmed with a team of oxen for breaking, and one team of horses, a plow, a drag, a grain cradle, and a lumber wagon. We paid \$1.00 a day for raking hay and binding grain. We paid \$1.50 a day for cradling grain, and around the stumps we used a hand sickle to out the grain. We filled the barn with hay, and always stacked any over that near the house. We also stacked all straw, and fed it.

"Douro" church was five miles away, but we attended regularly. I could cut across country and get to church in about three miles. Here is my church record sent by the priest of St. Joseph's Church, Douro, Ontario, in Canada.

Usually at my home our relatives would come to see us on Sundays, and we would all join in singing familiar songs until ten o'clock. Father played a flute, which I have now. It was made in London, England, and on each of its four parts is stamped METZLER LONDON. Father was in demand to play for the country dances, and our "hobnail" boots made sawdust fast on the wood floors, which had to be swept out with a broom. Among the songs we sang, I can remember this one:

"I'm Paddy Miles, an Irish boy who came across the sea. For singing and for dancing I think I can plaze ye.
 "I can sing a song with any man, as I did in days of yore. On St Patrick's Day I long to wear the hat me father wore.
 "I bid you all good evening, good luck to you I say, And when I'm on the ocean I hope for me you'll pray.
 "I'm going to a happy land, a place called "Ballemore,
 "To be welcome back to Paddy's land with the hat me father wore
 "It's old but it's beautiful, it's the best you ever seen,
 "It was warn for more than 90 years in that little Isle so green,
 "From me father's great ancestors it descended with galore
 "A relic of old decency, the hat me father wore."

My first opportunity to have a room by myself for sleeping entirely alone was when rolled in a blanket on the prairie with the stars as my electric lights. I always attended the Catholic Church, and I never had any religious prejudice, as easily seen since my wife was full blood Scotch. I was treasurer for many years here of the Catholic Church, and I donated the Church Bell to the present church.

As I look back, among many causes for our present farming conditions, one was caused by "would-be" farmers who get their land for nothing from good old "Uncle Sam," got their building material on time from the lumber companies, their food on time from the merchant, and taxes on time from the government, were the main causes of our lowering of living standards. We lived beyond our means, and luxuries which the country could not afford, and not upon necessities for a decent living for any family. Also, we kept raising valuations, and tax rates were also increased so that the tax burden became too great, and is too great by one-half. We will never be prosperous until we are assured that taxes will be cut in half, and also definitely assured that taxes can not be boosted by any new "boards," either city, county, or state, and also include the U. S. Government. I think it a big joke in a country where "wheat" raising has proved a joke to our successful "pray as we go" farmers.

I believe that dam building to conserve run-off waters is good, provided it is done so it actually lasts. Irrigation is good, but not too much land to any farmer, until he learns how to do the various lines of work necessary to success in irrigation. I believe all this work should be let to the lowest responsible bidder, and the contract should state positively that local labor should be used on every contract, and minimum labor wage should be specified on each contract. I have never had any direct benefits from F.S.A. or W.P.A. programs, in so far as I am personally concerned, however our community has received direct benefits.

I still think that for a poor man this country is one of the very best places on earth, if he is able and willing to work. Remember, I say "able and willing to work." Regarding government aid for North Dakota people, I suppose you mean North Dakota farmers and ranchers. If so, I say if you are to give aid to farmers, give it direct to the farmer in cash to him and have it in cash for which he gives a receipt then and there. You then know he gets the cash and he then don't go to any booze joint to cash a check you might give him. Enter and check your books for each farmer who receives such aid, and if he fails to come out of his dependence on "Uncle Sam" in a short time, then cut him off entirely and for good, and let the county take care of him as they think best.

Too great a part of this present U. S. Government aid is spent on clerk and office hire, for ignorant person in office who do not know what it is all about. Under present general conditions when "Uncle Sam" starts a dollar rolling to the farmers, there are many times he only received ten to twenty cent for each dollar started. In my own farming I used the methods my father taught me. Intensive cultivation, fertilizers, "and know that all the soil needed such work.

I have always taken the Williston Farmers' Press; The Williston Herald, and I read "Readers Digest" regularly. I have lots of fun looking over my large variety of "old time" photos.

I never erred about the World War., although my son was among the first to enlist here. Bank failures did not hurt me. Greatest prosperity years were 1906 to 1912. Greatest loss was in 1913 and 1914. Present European wars are their fights, let us stay at home, and let them settle that over there as they think best. Keep their own plates clean.

In looking back over my life, my only regret is that I did not come four years sooner. It was a hard fight but it was worth it. Uncle Sam took us in, gave us a piece of land for a home, opened his arms and nursed us, and is still doing so. A great country where you have got an equal break. What in tell more does any man want? "Freedom" as shouted in public by politicians to me mean: Freedom to worship God as I please, to have aspirations for myself and family, to live in peace with my neighbors, and pay one hundred cents on a dollar to support all necessary public services.

I want to tell you about one of the best known women in this vicinity. I refer to "Grandma Gibbs," known in the lower Yellowstone Valley as "Queen of the Tramps." Her only child was Charlie Gibbs to whom I have referred previously. He was a soldier in the U. S. Army at Fort Buford and interpreter for the Indians at Ft. Buford. Her home was near Newlon P.O. and I understood that her husband was a doctor. She was well educated and had been a nurse on the Mississippi River steam-boats during, the Civil War. In the summertime she used a red, white and blue umbrella or parasol. Her home at Newlon P.O. was known as a place where no one ever left because they were hungry. Money or not she would feed them.

When my daughter, Helen was sick as a baby, Grandma Gibbs nursed her back to health, as she had moved here to live. Her home was in a log house about Second Avenue East and First Street East.:

Her son died before she did. She was a natural mother and nurse to everyone in illness or trouble. She was 91 years old when she died and I paid all her funeral expenses.

The first warranty deed on record in the Register of Deeds office is Document #2, filed Nov. 17th, 1893, for 40 acres of land from Charles D. Gibbs and Kate Gibbs, his wife, to John Heffernan--\$150.00 cash. I notice in the Daily Herald of April 10th, 1940, that their son, Dan Gibbs, age 62, died in Grand Forks, N. D., on April 7th leaving three grown sons and a wife.

You ask me about the Harding and Suffolk gang along about 1887. Harding and Suffolk made their headquarters in a dwelling located where the present Ford Garage stands, where rooms were for rent but not a regular hotel. I never learned where they came from. Harding had a nice appearing wife, and he was easy to talk with. Suffolk was a cold blooded man in his looks. A man named Billy Allen loaned Suffolk a saddle, and Suffolk moved his headquarters to Culbertson, and took the saddle with him. Later Allen wanted the saddle returned, and he was told to come and get it. He did go to Culbertson to get it, and went to the stable where it was, and while doing this, Suffolk shot him. From all I heard at the time and since, I believe Harding and Suffolk were partners, and the brains of the gang of horse and cattle thieves. As I recollect the date, in 1887, the citizens and ranchers had become tired of the gang and I saw them one day they gathered the gang, one by one, hog-tied them, threw them into a lumber wagon and started east. Charlie Gibbs and a deputy sheriff named "Frenchy," with the sheriff from Minot, were the three men who hog-tied the gang and put them in the wagon that started east and was never heard from again. No one appeared to care, and possibly the Missouri River was their burial ground. I saw those men that day. This deputy sheriff named and called by all of us "Frenchy," was afterward killed while on a drunken spree. He was a nice man to have around when he was sober, but when drinking wanted quick action, and he got it—on day from a saloon-keeper named Al Martin. Frenchy was in a saloon with his revolver drawn and flourishing and shouting about shooting a hat from the bar. He went out, and then Martin got his rifle from the closet, and put it behind the bar, anticipating that Frenchy would return, and might start shooting, which he did, and then Martin killed him with the rifle. Martin had a clear self defense case, and was not even arrested. He left here soon after and never came back. I understand Harding went from here to Glasgow, and shot a man in a row there, and was hung by vigilantes. Phil Gates-Post Master here in 1887.

*Notes for JOHN HEFFERNAN: Date of death calculated from age and dates given in obituary
Place of birth listed as Campbellford, Ontario in 1976 article: John & Elinor Heffernan
Date of death may be 14 March 1942, per Ernest Heffernan Family Tree listed in Sources*

Autobiography lists place of birth as Indian River - Obit lists it as Campbellford

Per Bismarck Daily Tribune, voted Sheriff of Williams County in 1891

JOHN HEFFERNAN: Burial: March 23, 1942, Williston (Riverview Cemetery), Williams, North Dakota, USA

Cause of Death: stroke

 LunneyME added this on 29 May 2012