

*** The Evolution of Farming on Stoney Ten**

Some thoughts on the evolution of farming on Sec 10-19-9 W of 2nd by Duncan Acton.

First, I would like to pay tribute to my grandfather Samuel Acton and grandmother Janet on their achievements in getting a homestead, developing the land, establishing 2 sections of land, building a 3 storey stone wall house with 6 bedrooms, 32 volt electricity, boiler heating with radiators in all rooms, septic tank sewer & running water in 1908 and built a 46 foot by 86 foot stone wall barn with a 32 foot high loft for feed in 1912. Grandfather was a skilled carpenter, born in Ontario in 1857. He went out to Winnipeg in 1880 where he worked as a carpenter.

Some thoughts will be conjecture on my part. A story Dad told of his father Samuel came to Wolseley the spring of 1883 after the CPR was completed to Regina. I believe he and a cousin, Jack Hartell, who went to inspect some land that an acquaintance surveyor they had met advised for a homestead. There were nice sloughs for water, trees for heat and shelter, good 40-acre fields, plus plenty of ducks, geese and deer for food.

Samuel put up a soddy on the NW10. He later decided to take SE10 where he applied for a patent in May 1883. He probably lived in the soddy for a few years with Jack Hartell as they built a log home for him on NE10. To build a soddy you plowed a furrow with a 12" moldboard plow 6" deep, cut the furrow into 1' squares and piled them for walls like bricks 8' high, put poles across for a roof, place sod on the poles for a cover. A few years later he built his own log home on SE10.

I imagine they bought a team of oxen, wagon, mould board plow, disc and harrows, carpenter tools gradually buying more machinery that they shared. One instance reported that Samuel rented a disc drill from Wm. Sharp for a \$1 a day in 1886. He picked up the drill before daybreak, sowed his crop and returned it back late that same day. He probably didn't have 40 acres broken then as he did a lot of carpentry work. He built a creamery for Perle at Wolseley, helped build the Perle house, Belle Farm at Indian Head, and buildings at Lebret to name a few.

First grain was broadcast by hand, harrowed in the ground. In the fall it was cut with a scythe, bundled by hand, tied by wrapping about 10 grain stocks of grain together, the 6" of the heads were wrapped around the bundle, twisted and tucked under to form the sheaf. Sisal twine was used a few years later. I believe a long stick called a flail was used to beat the sheaves to thresh them. Then likely some hand operated devices as a rotary beater, wind blowers and sieves were used until a horse powered thresher was built. I believe a grain binder became a machine to cut and bind sheaves by

1888-1890. About this time, stooks were gathered and put into stacks about 15 feet diameter and 15 feet high. Then a custom thresher came around to thresh them, often into winter.

In 1894, Samuel Acton and G.P. Campbell bought a horse powered thresher to do custom work. The horse walked in a circle hooked to a 10-to-15-foot shaft with a bevelled gear that was connected to another shaft and gears, pulleys and belts to operate the threshing machine. The grain was emptied into bags or a wagon box and put into a granary. Straw was piled on a drag and pulled away by a team of horses. Later threshing machines had a straw blower to make large piles of straw and a grain elevator to put the grain into granaries.

About 1902, Samuel threshed with the Beasleys. They were good mechanically so probably had a gas-powered engine on the thresher. Also threshed with Billy and Bert Sharp. Next, I know of was a Sawyer Massey portable thresher Samuel Acton bought in 1912. Straw blower, grain elevator, powered by a Sawyer Massey tractor. It was probably second hand as they only kept it one year and bought a Sawyer Massey steam engine and thresher. There were 8 teams hauling sheaves to the thresher. There was a picture of dad driving a Titan tractor pulling an International thresher dated 1920. It was probably used till 1930. Dad bought a steam engine again to drive the thresher. I remember I was 4 years old, sitting on the steamers water tank. They threshed with it till 1939. My brother Sam was the fireman that year. That was the last year we used it. It needed a man to feed it straw, another to bring straw and water. Dad and Uncle Bob supervised. In 1940 we were short of help as a lot of men went off to war. They bought an Allis Chalmers tractor to drive the thresher. My cousin Fred Walker and I did the stooking and drove a team to haul the sheaves to the thresher. I was 14 and Fred was 16. We kept up to the other men, but my wrists and arms were sore the first week. In 1941 dad bought a 6-foot Case combine and we straight cut combined wheat and threshed the barley and oats. I hauled the grain away from the combine with King and Fly with a wagon. I shovelled it into a granary until the bin was half full. Then Uncle Alex had an auger on his truck, he could reverse it and auger the grain into the top door of the bin. Dad and I would combine about 500 bushels a day. The W30 Massey tractor we bought in 1937 powered the combine by PTO.

In 1946 we bought an 8-foot Massey Harris combine. It had a mounted motor to drive it, pulled by the W30 tractor. It could combine 1000 bushels a day. It had a better pickup. Also bought a 12-foot John Deere swather. We hauled grain with a Ford one-ton truck, elevated the grain into the bin with a paddle type elevator. Next dad bought a 12-foot SP Massey Harris #21 combine in 1948. We helped Sam combine his crop at Wolseley. In 1952 dad, Sam & I bought a SP Massey #27 and a 12-foot Cockshutt swather. In 1956 Sam and I bought a Massey #90 SP combine. The rye was 7 ft tall that year so was difficult swathing even with the new 14' Cockshutt swather I bought. We put a platform on the

back of the swather and my brother Cliff worked for me that summer. He stood there on the platform with a pitchfork to keep the grain moving on the swather table. That was the last year I ever grew rye.

In 1946 I started farming with Dad. Aunt Jennie had 80 acres on the NE of 9 not broken. It was hard work digging the stones out of the sod, breaking the sod and clearing the bush but I rented the land from her. A few years later I also got some income from crop grain on SW3. In 1954 I rented section 10 from dad 1/2 share.

To continue the story of machinery used and the power provided. The first was a team of 2 oxen pulling a 12" 1 furrow plow, operated by a man who controlled the plow by holding long handles attached to the plow. They probably had a disc and harrows. A few years later they had 4 horses to replace the oxen. Gradually implements became bigger, 1 furrow sulky on wheels then 2 and 3 furrow plows. The moldboard was replaced with a 3 ft disc plow, then larger until 1928 when the 6' one way disc plow was used. It took 8 horses on a 24' oak beam drawbar 12"x4" thick to pull it. I remember helping Sam hook up the horses to work.

Dad took over Section 10 in 1920. About 1910 summer fallow became a farming practice as it saved moisture by having the land not seeded for 1 year and a time to kill weeds that were spreading. A 12' tandem disc and a 10' duck foot cultivator was pulled by 6 horses. A 10' 20 run drill was used for seeding.

Horses were used for power until 1937. Dad bought a W30 International tractor with rubber tires. It was one of the first rubber-tired tractors that came to our town. There was a lot of doubters. Dad bought a 1/2 section on 3 in 1943. We started seeding with a 6' one way with a seeding attachment in 1938, harrowing behind it to kill weeds and firm the soil, probably pulled the harrows with horses.

In 1946, 2,4-D was used to kill weeds in standing crops, wild mustard was a serious problem, also French weed, pig weed etc. In 1947 dad bought a Minneapolis U tractor and an 8' Minneapolis one way with a seeding attachment, JD 12' cultivator, 36' harrows, 30' weed sprayer to improve farming operations.

In 1949, dad bought another Minneapolis U tractor and John Deere cultivator and in 1950, a JD 14-foot drill. I started buying equipment on my own in 1951, a CCIL circular harrow to spread straw more evenly and worked soil better. In 1956 I bought a 12-foot discer with seeding attachment and coil packers which had a shallower seeding depth then the one way also a 14ft Morris rod weeder to kill weeds after seeding and for summer fallowing. It retained the stubble on top to prevent soil drifting.

In 1962, I bought dads share of equipment and rented the land for 1/3 share and bought an MM 5 Star diesel tractor. In 1965, an 1850 Cockshutt tractor with a cab, a 22' Cockshutt deep tillage cultivator, a 15' discer with seed and fertilizer attachments and put coil land packers behind, also larger

harrows. Also in 1962, I got a 430 Cockshutt SP combine and bought an 18' Versatile swather. It was an excellent swather and kept it for several years and in 1967, I bought a Cockshutt 542 SP combine with a cab.

In 1963, I bought the SE 10 to make improvements in home, bins etc. We were doing income tax in Regina with an accountant Thomas Robinson. He drew up the documents for estimated value. In 1965, I bought NE 10 and in 1969, I bought W1/2 10 but still rented NE3 from dad till I bought it in 1972. In 1973 I bought partial 1/2 of 12-19A-9 from Mac Scheinbien for Brian and SE 35-18-10 from Wes Obleman. Brian started farming with me in 1974. In 1983, Brian and I bought the W 1/2 of 35-18-10 from Gwen Dixon, that was the last of my land purchases. With the purchase of extra land, I bought a JD 7020 4 WD tractor, a 27' JD 1900 Duplex discer with coil packers and a Cockshutt 36ft deep tillage cultivator.

Brian and Patty were married in 1977, and Milly and I moved into a new home we built on 325 McDonald St in Lemberg. Brian and I bought a 1977 IHC 914 pull type combine and rented a tractor to pull it; then in 1978, bought the JD 4240 to pull it. We bought a 21' Renn swather in 1972 and later added 3' to make it 24'. In 1982, I bought the JD 7721 pull type combine and JD 4640 tractor and in 1983, a 28' International PT swather. We bought a bi-directional Versatile 256 4WD loader tractor in 1984; then in 1986 bought the Versatile 9030 swather header for the 256 to double swath 60ft for the new Versatile Trans Axial 2000 combine and used 8440 JD 4WD tractor to run it. We replaced the 8440 with a JD 8450 4WD a couple years later. We got an older model 24' swather with a pickup reel to cut peas and that cut canola better. In 1991, we started straight cutting wheat and bought a SP JD 9500 combine and a 25ft straight cut header and next year a 24 ft JD 224 Flex header with pickup reels to cut lentils and peas. We sold the 24' Versatile and bought a 28' model; then, in 1996 we purchased a JD 9600 SP combine and a 30ft Honey Bee draper header. In 2001, we got rid of our straw walker loss and bought a JD 9650 STS rotary combine and a 930D draper header. We were straight cutting polish canola for a few years so bought an AgShield canola pusher to lodge the canola so it wouldn't shatter as much then straight cut Argentine canola.

About 1920, dad put up a 40x60 foot implement shed with a 14x14 foot door on each end for the thresher and steam engine to be stored. Two 14-foot and a 16-foot door on each side to store binders, tractors, cars etc. Another important building was the blacksmith shop to repair the machinery, heat plow shares in the forge to pound them out to sharpen then temper them, also harrow teeth. Harnesses were also repaired and oiled. King and Fly were exceptionally strong and steady horses. They would break the wooden double tree (they were hitched together to pull a load) so I had to cut down a steel pulling bar used for 4 horses fastened on 2 metal pulling bars to hitch them to a load.

In 1964, I started building steel 1350-bushel bins on cement floors; then 2700 and 3500 bushel bins the following years with 10x10 foot aeration floors. In 1967, I built a 22x28 foot shop and used it for grain the first year and then insulated it and heated it with oil furnace in about 1974.

An epoxy coated hopper fertilizer bin in 1979 to store 11-52-0 fertilizer, instead of handling bags. We spread nitrogen fertilizer for a couple years then deep banded NH₃ for a few years till we used an air seeder to band 46-0-0 in the fall. Now there are 11 fertilizer bins to store the fertilizer till seeding.

In 1997, Brian put up a grain loop handling system with two 2000-bushel overhead hopper bins and four 5000-bushel hopper bins in the line. There is an 8-inch tube with a chain and paddle hooking all those bins together to load them from the driveway pit or unload them into the truck on the driveway or transfer grain between any of the 6 bins. Also, a natural gas grain dryer under the second overhead hopper bin to dry grain automatically into any of the 5 other bins.

In 1972, I built a 25x36 Quonset with two 10x10 foot doors for a truck scale shed to sell certified seed; then in 1974 a 47x70 foot Quonset for machinery storage with a 24-foot door. In 1992 Brian built a 50x50 foot steel insulated heated shop with a 24x14 foot and a 12x12 foot overhead door.

Brian grew timothy hay for a couple years and built a 60x108 foot tarp shed to store the hay. It was used for storing grain one year but today they use it for machinery storage. In 2019 Douglas built an 80x110 ft insulated pole shed with an office addition on the side. It has in-floor heat and two large 45x20 and 40x20 foot bifold doors with enough room to fix machinery all winter.

There have been many improvements in the technology of planting crops, such as 2,4-D chemical in 1945, Avadex in 1960, Round Up in 1974 plus many others to control weeds in crop. This allowed changes in farming practices to allow continuous cropping which stopped soil drifting and conserved soil moisture by not cultivating the soil as much. This resulted in needing more fertilizers and different nutrients to maintain and increase yields.

My grandson Douglas joined Brian on the farm in 2012. They have kept up all aspects of planting, spraying for different weeds, pests, diseases and soil management. So, I believe the old homestead is in great hands for another generation.

To Grandpa and Granny Acton, I believe you would be proud of what we have done.

Notes from Duncan

- Wind charger probably put up in 1940. Gave to Bill Relf in about 1950. We got power in 1949.
- Low barn torn down by Sam, Ken Englot?? and myself in about 1946 and built the pig pen with the lumber. Ed Scheirer built the hen house next year. The cow barn was the one built after Billy Martin had fire. He was sent out to the barn to get some fresh cows' milk for either Sam or Doris. Billy Martin was mentally challenged so the higher-class people didn't want it to be known, so sent them away. Grampa Samuel accepted him.
- Old granary torn down in 1956.
- On the NE 1/4 of 9, Aunt Jennie owned the whole 1/4 as when I went to school, Uncle Bob rented it from her. The south 1/2 of the quarter wasn't broken and just used for pasture. Grannie Acton asked me if I would break it up and rent it from Aunt Jennie, which I did. I can't understand it belonging to Dad unless there was a different division of land before Grampa died.
- Philip Erbach as related to me by dad. His father was working him and Carl very hard and getting nothing, so both left home. Philip came to dads for the summer. Finally, his dad begged Philip, the better of the two, to come home offering him shares in the farm.
- Early Houses notes page 3
 - A note on the cattle barn. It was built after the fire in the barn in 1904. I believe as Billy Martin was sent to get milk for Samuel when he had diphtheria. So, dad was 10 years old when he was looking for a horse and Nancy got diphtheria. It was used for horses and cattle until the big barn was built in 1912, then mostly for cattle until about 1932 when some cattle were put in the big barn. Finally, it was a pig barn and chicken house until it was torn down.