

The Prairie

settlers home. No written record was left of the trip. We only know what little he told us about it. He had been over the trail the year before, and probably had no trouble. He arrived in time to break a little land and sow some oats and wheat. They also planted some potatoes and garden. Rutabagas were planted also.

The new home was a one room sod house, with two small windows and one door. Joe Mason had built it. They also had a small sod barn. The shallow well on the place had been dug by hand. There was plenty of water, but it had to be drawn up with a bucket on a rope.

After Dad had gotten the home fixed up, and things arranged in the house, he sent for his wife and family. The train would arrive in town about midnight, so he started plenty early, so as to be there to meet them. It was close to twenty four miles, the round trip. His oxen, even in high gear didn't move very fast.

He was at the depot with the team and wagon when he train arrived. He had fixed some blankets in the wagon box for the kids to ride on, and perhaps they would sleep on the long ride home. Ma said that they were all tired out and the kids real fussy when they got off the train. It had been a long tiresome trip.

It was a beautiful night, clear and still, with myriads of stars in the sky, as they rolled along the train towards the new home. They had faith in the new land, faith in themselves, and plenty of courage. It was a slow journey. The old high wheeled wagon creaking along the trail, which was a track, not very deeply worn at that time. It curved here and there across the prairie, around the sloughs and over the low hills. Occasionally they would ford a small creek. They were happy to be nearing their new home.

Just at sunrise of a beautiful spring morning, they arrived at Daugherty's house, a about one half mile from home. New friends and neighbors, and they were invited to stop for breakfast, but Ma wanted to finish the journey, so they drove on. In after years, Ma often spoke of that morning. All nature seemed to have a "smile of welcome" for them, she said. They had to ford another small creek and ascend another hill and they were home. The sod house and barn were a welcome sight.

They were all hungry. Dad unyoked the cattle and turned them out to graze. Then he instructed Ma in the gentle art of twisting prairie hay for fuel. It was her first lesson. She became very adept