

The First Home. 1875 and Later

his flour loaded on the sled, he got an early start for home. Picking up their mail, also the mail for their neighbor, he put the snowshoes in gear and started out. There was no traffic problem or stop signs to slow him up. He could go as fast as he wished. The weather was cold, but there was no wind, and that was lucky for him. It may have reminded him of the July day in 1863 when his Regiment marched twenty miles through the mud after the Battle of Gettysburg. They were chasing the Rebs then and now he was headed for home and his family. Stopping at the neighbors on the way home, he left their mail and also any news and gossip that he had picked up in town. Mother was watching for him, and no doubt she shut off the worry machine as soon as he came in sight.

They didn't have too big a supply of kerosene when the first storm came. When that was gone, they put a cotton wick in a saucer, in some melted grease, and lighted the end that hung over the edge. This furnished a dim light, and smoked up the house in the process. It was a trifle better than no light at all. They had a few candles, which they saved for an emergency. The kerosene lamp was plumb empty. Dad didn't dare bring the kerosene with the flour for obvious reasons.

In the spring of 1881 after the snow had gone and the ground dried up, Ma and the older boys picked corn in one field while Dad planted in another. They were happy having come through a terrible winter safely. They had some corn now and that meant Johnny cake and corn meal mush with milk for breakfast. The left-over mush was fried for dinner and for a change, a fresh batch of mush was made for supper. They had kerosene for the lamp now, not the smelly old rag in a dish. Sugar was obtained and Ma made cookies at times. That was really a *treat*.

The prairie was greening up and in early April, the dainty, fragile crocus blossoms were out. The great flocks of geese, ducks and other birds were back. Great flocks of the sand hill cranes were sailing majestically in the sky. Ma and Dad picked up courage and began to make more plans, for there was another boy in the family now.

Dad had selected a spot to the northwest of where they first settled — about two miles north of where the town of Rushmore was to be after the Chicago Northwestern railroad reached this