

William Francis Lyons

Born: February 3, 1861 of Jeremiah and Ellen Lyons, in Chicago, Illinois.

Died: February 17, 1943 at Rapid City, South Dakota.

Married: February 22, 1887 at Madison, South Dakota to Katherine Crossgrove, of James and Bridget Crossgrove. Ms. Katherine was born March 29, 1865 at Bellevue, Wisconsin.

Died: August 6, 1949 at Aberdeen, South Dakota.

Both are buried in the Catholic Cemetery at Wagner, South Dakota. To this union was born 13 children as follows in order of ages: Dennis, Ann, James, Jerry, Catherine, John, William, Mary, Richard Rei, Thomas, Infant Joseph, died, Joseph, and Robert.

At this time Cousin Nell Smith of Twin Falls, Idaho, is the oldest daughter of Richard Lyons and the Senior Member of this organization. On June 29, 1955, I visited her in her home. We spent the entire evening discussing the dates and incidents by which she was able to establish when the Lyons migration to the Dakota Territory took place. Since returning from Idaho, I have received the attached letter from her, which in part: the arrival of the Richard F. Lyons "family" in Lake County Dakota Territory. It would appear that Uncle Dick must have come sometime previous as several buildings were there at the time he left the place on October 8, the same year his wife Jenny died and he returned to Iowa. He remarried and in September 1883 returned and settled in Carthage, Dakota Territory. She remembered staying with Nan Rei until Christmas that year. The next summer she returned to Reis and found that Grandfather, Grandmother and Uncle Will had arrived from Cresco County, Iowa. This therefore would establish the arrival of Will Lyons, in the Dakota Territory, as 1884.

When Uncle Dick homesteaded he also took as was then the custom a tree claim and a preemption all in the same section Uncle John Rei and his wife Aunt Bridget homesteaded in the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the section. The homestead house was built in the exact center of the section. He and Uncle Dick made a gentleman's agreement and set the south 80 rods of the north and south $\frac{1}{2}$ mile line west 10 rods and north 80 rods east 10 rods. This leaves room for the farmstead in the middle section.

From here on I will have to put together the story of their lives from remembered bits of conversation, through the years.

It seems that when Uncle Dick's wife died leaving three small children he was forced to give up the operation of the farm so arranged to have my uncle Jere Lyons who was homesteading nearby take over the operation. Here it appears that my father [Will Lyons] came from Iowa to join as a partner. Many incidents of which my father has spoken would substantiate this. One of which was how Bessie Lyons had colic very bad and cried all the time. To give Uncle Jere and Aunt Mary Ann a chance to rest up, he used to get up and walk the floor with her. This took place when Bessie was a baby. He told of a later occasion when she was old enough to run around by herself. There was a hole in the floor of the second story oat bin. He found her hanging through the hole. At this time she must have been about three years old.

He told of helping Uncle Jere breakup his homestead with oxen. They had a bulky ox which they had to hitch another ox team on to get them started in the morning. He told of sleeping in Uncle Jere's claim shanty, and one night being awakened by a violent disturbance, under the bed, which proved to be an old white ox reaching through an open door and eating salt which was in the sack under the bed. These incidents would indicate that my father lived with Uncle Jere on Uncle Dick's homestead during the years 1884 until he married my mother Katherine Crossgrove in 1887.

It was during this period that our Grandfather's brother Pat and Aunt Johanna and family arrived also from Cresco, Iowa. Uncle Pat's family consisted of D. P. (Den), Maggie and Katie from his first wife and Pat, Will, and Bridget Delaney my Aunt Johanna. There also was Mary Smith, Aunt Johanna's daughter by a former marriage. It seems that Den (D. P.) and Pat came first. Den was married to Emma Collier and a daughter Christ Collier who settled near Lake Badus (near Madison). Pat and Maggie never married; Katie married Pat Clair and Bridget married John Delaney. Will died in the typhoid fever epidemic in the early 90s. Pat died in Sioux City in 1930s or 1940s.

An account of this closely knit community would not be complete without including the Flynn's, Pat and Tom and Tom's wife Nell who came from Cresco vicinity. One of my oldest memories is of Mrs. Flynn. "She was a good sport" as we say today.

My assignment was to write some of the life history of Will and Katie Lyons. This I find hard to do without including some of their associated people and events. In order to do this I will have to jump about from one incident to another, without consideration of proper succession of time and events.

The events as we find them indicate at the time in 1887 when they were married Uncle Jere left the partnership and went on his own place. He had built a new house which still stands. Then Will and Uncle

Dick formed a partnership which developed into quite a large farming operation. It necessitated from 30 to 50 workhorses and from 5 to 20 hired man. It was due to the management of this force that he (Will) acquired the commonly known name of "Boss" by which name he was known the rest of his life. This partnership was dissolved and the family moved on the "Hoidle Place" which Grandfather Lyons had left when he died.

During this time the community raised the finest of Percheron horses, which were needed to do the work. Colts were raised and older horses sold. "Boss" [*my father, Will*] was an expert judge of horses and bought and shipped a great many in those days.

We lived on the Hoidle Place until 1901. Previous to this time Uncle Dick had found out that there were 16 quarters of good land on the Yankton Indian reservation in Charles Mix County which had been fraudulently allotted to Indian names but no such Indian was ever born. We, with other relations, moved there and claimed the land by Squatters Right. Long years of litigation ensued. In the end the courts ordered the allotment canceled and the land reinstated as Tribal lands to be re-allotted thereby defeating the white man's claim.

The "Boss" purchased one quarter from the Indian (Mrs. Foreman) and lived there until at the time of the Depression in the 30s the family broke up and they went to live with Mary Robinson, (daughter) where both lived until they died.

Written by D. B. (Dennis) Lyons, son of William Francis Lyons, 1955, Keyapaha, South Dakota