

Gold Bar Stock Farm

A Farm that Turned into Gold

Interesting Story of Alberta Pioneer who broke his first acres with four milch cows. Milking Shorthorns and Berkshire Hogs factors in Success of D. W. Warner and Sons.

By H. HIGGINBOTHAM

It seems a far cry from the present farms of D. W. Warner and Sons at Tofield, Alberta, with their up-to-date and well constructed buildings, to the old homestead of the senior partner in Dixon County, Nebraska, where in 1882 Mr. Warner, then a young man of twenty-four, broke the first forty acres of his homestead with four cows hitched to a twelve inch breaking plow.

The story of the intervening years gives an interesting sketch of the pioneer farmer's life.

Today D. W. Warner and Sons are operating two farms of a section each at Tofield, on the shores of beautiful Beaver Lake—a fine stretch of water in wooded country, about one and a half hours' run on the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway east of Edmonton. Here they are carrying on a mixed farming business, raising pure-bred milking Shorthorns and Berkshire hogs, shipping cream into Edmonton and growing grain and fodder for feed and sale. The milking Shorthorn herds, comprising about 100 head, are housed in barns supplied with every modern improvement in construction and equipment, while the aristocratic Berkshires revel in almost palatial houses supplied with cotton fronts and swinging doors. A glance over the farms show that no expense has been spared in their equipment. The young men who are managing the farms, John Warner and A. C. Dodds, have everything to their hand.

It was different in the old days in Nebraska when D. W. Warner made his start on leased school land and had to hitch up his dairy to go to work on the land. Money is not quite so scarce now—but that's getting on too fast with the story.

Broke Prairie With Cows

Mr. Warner's father was a millwright and small farmer in Iowa. He found a wife from Pennsylvania and from the marriage there were eleven children—five boys and six girls. As Mr. Warner, the millwright, was named Gideon, the children were known locally as "Gideon's Band." Biblical and classical names seem to run in the family. The eldest boy, who was afterwards to settle in Alberta, was named after a great American orator and statesman. No wonder the other children in the country school laughed when the new teacher asked young Warner if he thought he "knew as much as Daniel Webster," and the boy said he did.

When he was seventeen Daniel was left to look after his father's farm, the father having his millwright's business to attend to. The boy developed a liking for good stock, and has ever since been associated with pure-bred stock. Most bachelor farmers starting out on raw prairie would have bought horses or oxen, but young Warner started out with four cows which yielded milk and calves as well as turning the prairie sod for him. Later, in 1898, when he sold out with the intention of coming to settle in the Canadian West, his herd of milking Shorthorns had made quite a name in the county, and the penniless young farmer of twenty years before realized close on \$8,000 from the sale of his farm and stock.

As a boy eleven years old he had, with his father and family, moved from Iowa into Nebraska when that state was just settling up. As a young man he sought virgin land in a newer section of Nebraska. In middle life he again heeded the call of the west and this time came to Western Canada. He made a trip of inspection alone in the fall of 1898, and in the following spring, having chosen the Edmonton district, came west with his wife and family. This time he did not need to use the cows for plowing, for he brought two four-horse teams of Morgan-bred mares which he had by this time acquired.

Selecting a Location

On his tour Mr. Warner looked over much of the territory in what are now the three provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, going via the C.P.R. from Winnipeg to Strathecona, and travelling some 600 miles away from the railway line by team. Trains were not very frequent then. From Estevan to Winnipeg there was one train a week, on a Friday. Mixed trains were being run on the recently opened Calgary-Edmonton line of the C.P.R. The train which carried Mr. Warner to Edmonton was also engaged in unloading telegraph poles at various points along the line, and for a good part of

to the high price set upon it for subdivision property, Mr. Warner sold the greater part of it and bought cheaper land at Tofield, using a part of the surplus in providing the fine equipment which characterizes the Beaver Meadows and Sunnyside farms.

Several factors influenced Mr. Warner in the choice of land at Strathecona. The rich black loam shows that the soil contains lots of humus and would therefore yield abundant crops. The thick vegetation also shows that the rainfall is ample. The river meant water for the stock, altho a never failing spring issuing from the high bank provided a still better supply, and with the shelter



Buildings on one of the Warner farms at Tofield, Alta. The poultry house adjoins the garden. The modern barn, together with milk house and implement shed, are seen in background.

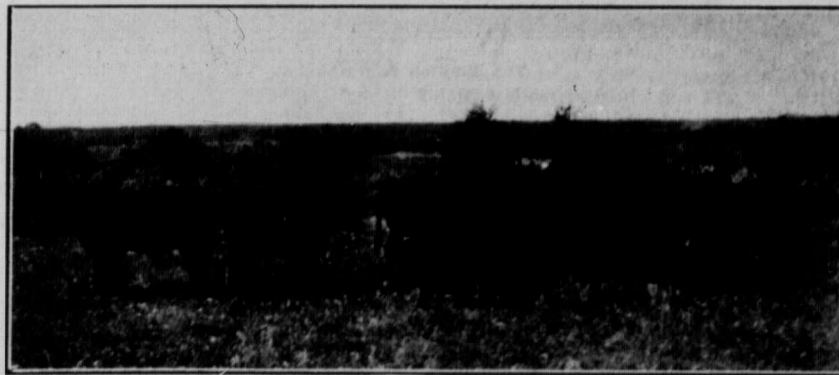
the way the passengers were able to walk in front of the train.

Strathecona was the furthest point that it was possible to go to by train on the western prairies. So he located on the southern bank of the river, east of Fort Edmonton, purchasing nearly a section of land from the Tait brothers, half-breed farmers, one of whom was also Hudson's Bay factor. As he prospered he added to his own the Burwick and McLeod farms, adjoining, making a farm of nearly 800 acres. The original owners reserved fifty acres along the river front for gold mining. Placer mining was carried on rather extensively on the North Saskatchewan at Edmonton. Gold is still found in the river,

of the valley made an ideal place for stock at all seasons of the year. The land was well covered with poplar and some spruce. This meant building material and fuel. During the first year after he settled on the farm at Strathecona, Mr. Warner cut 100,000 feet of lumber, which practically paid him back his purchase price of the farm. As the land was deeded before 1887, when the Dominion government began to reserve coal rights, the coal went with the land, and the farm is underlaid with coal seams—not coal of a high quality, but good domestic coal.

Emphasized Livestock

From the start the livestock side of the farm operations was emphasized. A



Part of the herd of milking Shorthorns pasturing near beautiful Beaver Lake

the not in sufficient quantities to make it a paying industry. A large gravel firm, operating dredges on the river, obtains about \$2,000 a year from flake gold which is floated off from the sand in the process of washing the gravel.

Gold Bar Farm

The presence of the gold in the river gave the name to the Warner farm—"Gold Bar Stock Farm." The farm has since been turned largely into gold. The rapidly growing capital of Alberta spread out over the surrounding district, and when the land at Strathecona, or South Edmonton, as it is now called, became too expensive to farm, owing

barn 100 feet long and 32 feet wide was erected with logs, cemented together with clay found on the river bank. The whole barn, with accommodation for thirty milch cows and as many head of horses, did not cost the owner over \$200 apart from the labor expended, and the logs cut from the farm. The loft floor was built so that it extended two feet over the walls of the barn on either side, making 36 feet in width and providing great storage capacity for feed. Adjoining the stable is a root cellar 56 feet long and 10 feet wide, giving 3,000 bushel capacity. Every fall this was packed with swedes and sugar man-

golds, providing succulent feed for the dairy cows and brood sows during the winter and early spring. The roots were a big factor in making a success of the hog business. Every year the Warner farm marketed from 150 to 250 head of hogs. Shortly after settling at Strathecona, Mr. Warner commenced to breed Berkshires, and has kept to this breed as the best adapted for the conditions of the Edmonton district. The sows remain active and are not as subject to rheumatism as some other breeds.

The Dual Purpose Cow

Milking Shorthorns have remained the favorite breed of cattle, and no other cattle have been kept. When Mr. Warner first came to Edmonton he found it hard to purchase milking Shorthorns in Western Canada, as most of the breed were of the beef type. He therefore bought cattle imported from the States. Most of the bulls he purchased were not less than seven years old. In this way he always knew what the daughters of his herd bull were producing at the pail, and only animals that had shown themselves sires of good milk producers were used.

Light horses have always been preferred for the work on the Warner farm. Having been used to the Morgan horse in the States, Mr. Warner continued to breed horses of around 1,100 or 1,200 pounds' weight, using a Hackney stud on his Morgan mares after he came to Canada. This type of horse is very suitable for army purposes or for city delivery work. Geldings were sold at good prices and the mares retained on the farm.

Six Year Rotation

Of the 800 acres comprising the farm some 350 were put under cultivation. All the work on the land was done with the farm mares. On breaking up new land Mr. Warner would sow wheat for the first crop. Wheat proved to be the crop which would best stand up on new land. Oats and barley, being heavier in the head and not so stiff in the straw, would go down. Following the wheat crop he took a crop of oats, and the next year green feed was grown and cut early, providing a forage crop, keeping down the weeds, and doing away with the summer fallow, which is unsuited to the conditions of Central Alberta where the rainfall is plentiful, as the succeeding crop continues growing too long and is apt to be frozen. Following the green oat crop, barley was seeded down with timothy. The preceding crop of green feed left a clean seed bed, and a good grade of barley, free from other grains, was produced. Two crops of hay were then taken from the timothy sod, after which it was broken up and seeded to wheat the following spring, completing a six-year rotation. Prairie sod was found to give the best results when broken in June or July. On old land the disc was used after the binder and again in the spring, and if the land was weedy it was sown to green feed. The timothy sod was plowed early in the fall, packed down and left till spring.

It is to be regretted that the real estate craze, as in so many other cases, raised the price of the land at Gold Bar until it became too expensive to farm, and as a consequence no new land has been broken up during the past three years and the greater part of the cultivated area has been left in timothy. Part of the farm is now held by speculators. The new farms at Tofield, however, are being rapidly brought to a high state of productivity; the milking Shorthorns are making good use of the pasture, and the large number of pure-bred Berkshire hogs will take care of a large quantity of coarse grains. The size and equipment of the buildings on

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