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Brown  
Home Child  
Montrose  
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My Journey to Canada

By Reverend Percy Brown

At the time, my destination was different. However, sometimes second best turns out to be best.

I was fourteen, in 1927, when the opportunity arrived. After living in a British orphanage for ten years, I read an announcement on the bulletin board. It stated that anyone who was fourteen years old could apply to immigrate to Australia. What a wonderful and exciting adventure! For the first time in many years, I felt light shining upon me. After taking several tests and passing the interviewing process, I was on my way!

Just as quickly as the opportunity came, it vanished. Because of a flu epidemic in Australia, all passages were cancelled. At the age of fourteen, I felt that my dreams had been crushed.

Another door opened. I was asked if I would like to go to Canada. What a blessing for me! I was on my journey with about twenty-nine other boys and three girls.

In March, 1927, I boarded the Montrose. I don't remember a lot of details about the journey. I do remember that, as we crossed the Irish Sea, I was seasick, so sick that I stayed in my cabin. However, the steward came to get me and made me eat breakfast. Quickly I was sick over the rail. The steward made me eat a second breakfast. Finally I was able to keep the food in my stomach. Other memories of seeing whales and sighting land are very vague.

After landing at St. John, I thought, I took a three-day train journey to Hamilton. There I stayed with Mr. Hill until he found me a place to stay. Mr. Hill was in charge of the children.

The first place was a farm in Caledonia. There the owners viewed me and another young boy as workers only. I worked outside from about 5 a.m. to sometimes 10 p.m.. I was allowed to stop only for a few minutes

to eat my meals. The other young man worked only in the house. So, we did not have time to develop any friendship.

One day I was so tired that I stopped the horses and rested before I had finished ploughing a field. I had been afraid of not being able to control the horses and falling onto the blades. While I was sleeping, the farmer passed me, but did not wake me up. When I awoke, it was dark. So, I took the horses to the barn and unsaddled them. When I went to get supper, the farmer told me that I could not eat until I had finished the field. I was tired; so, I refused. He refused to give me supper.

After six weeks of very hard work for which I was paid five dollars a month, I was returned to Mr. Hill.

This episode had branded me as incorrigible young man. For two weeks, I was kept in my room. After this time, I was asked if I could behave and do as I was told. Of course I said "Yes". Otherwise, I may have been sent back to Britain.

My second place of work was in Drumbo. The farmer and his wife treated me as if I were their own child. It was this couple who took me to church and who influenced me to sing in the choir. I spent a wonderful six-year period with them.

Am I glad that I came to Canada? Indeed, yes! Canada has allowed me to follow many pathways; it has granted me a successful living and an opportunity to have a wonderful family. I have been very blessed.

Many years have passed since I arrived in Canada. Now, at the age of 87 years, I am an ordained minister in the United Church of Canada. I was ordained in London, Ontario, at the age of 60 ½ years old. So, I have been blessed in many ways.