

Thomas Selfe (1887-1960)

by Edith (Selfe) Benest

My grandfather was Theodore Selfe, born in Somerset, England, 1857. My grandmother was the former Ellen Chivers, born 1855. She lived in Stayner from the early 1900's. Ellen passed away in 1936 and Theodore in 1946.

Their younger son, my father, Tom, born in 1887 in Somerset, left England, working his way by ship to Australia and eventually to Vancouver, BC. He joined his family around 1910. His parents lived on the 2nd Line (Airport Road) at the end of Centre Street. His older brother, my uncle Alf and aunt Mabel had lived in Meaford and then settled on a farm just north of Stayner, on the 2nd Line diagonally across from the Cemetery. He also had a blacksmith shop at the same location.

My father acquired a small farm at the west end of Centre Street, just inside the western town boundary. In 1919, my mother, the former Alice Andow came to Canada from Somerset. They were married at the Church of the Good Shepherd. In 1923 a new house was built by Mr. Milt Woodard and Mr. John Hughes, both well known Staynerites.

The house is still there along with many changes to the area. My father was in mixed farming, including bee-keeping.

During the Depression years, my two brothers and I remembered the difficult times, although we likely had advantages over those in cities. With fields, bush lot, apple orchard, large vegetable garden, farm animals, we had sources of dairy products, meat and produce, and always pets of various kinds .

I remember my grandfather delivering milk with a horse and democrat. My uncle Alf took over the delivery before pasturization became mandatory and Besse's Creamery became a full dairy operation.

In War years, my father worked at the Collingwood Shipyards. Later he specialized in raising turkeys for market. He supplied the larger dressed birds to the Lambert Hotel.

In June 1960, a few years after retiring, my father suffered a heart attack and passed away at the home where he lived most of his life.

Footnote: One may wonder if young Staynerites could visualize the small Town of Stayner in earlier days. Very few people had cars, and horses were the main means of transportation. Shopping and visiting meant horse & buggy, walking or cycling. Distances were covered by train. All churches provided driving sheds for the horses with buggies, wagons, sleighs, or cutters in winter.

Note from D.A. Milsap: This is the 1st story, published in the Fall, 1998 Newsletter.