

## AN EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT OF VERMILION'S FIRST FAIR

(as recorded in a letter written by Ernest M. Taylor (1885 - 1915) to his sister Edith dated October 24<sup>th</sup> 1906)

A week ago today was the Vermilion Agricultural Show and church concert, and it was really the greatest dissipation I have had in this country, which is not saying a great deal.

It was a perfect day, warm and bright, and we started off for town in good time, Ray and Wilson in the gig and me on horse-back. We did not meet any of our friends before dinner though we saw most of them arriving in, some in wagons and some on horse-back.

After a good dinner we wended our way to the show ground. Of course the show was nothing very great, but considering that so very few had anything to show, the country being so newly settled, it was very creditable for the first one of its kind. There were quite a crowd of people present, and we much enjoyed meeting our different neighbours and having a talk. After the judging was finished, some racing took place, and after that we saw a very good bronco busting exhibition. A cowboy in Vermilion volunteered to ride a steer if anybody had a wild one handy. None was forthcoming, but the owner of one of the livery barns sent for a horse, of known evil disposition which had never been ridden before. When the horse came, it was impossible to approach it with the saddle—the mere sight of it made it kick and plunge. The cowboy then got out his rope and after one or two throws noosed one of its front legs. With one or two skilful turns he got the leg securely fastened to its body, so that it only had three legs to stand on. Another attempt was then made to saddle the horse, but with no success. He then threw the horse single handed by means of his rope, fastened all its legs together and saddled it while on the ground. Then he let it get up, unfastened all the ropes and leapt into the saddle. The horse bucked, kicked and reared, snorting loudly all the time, while the ring of spectators rushed back out of the way. For about twenty minutes it did its best to unhorse him, but was not able to, and then it realized it was beaten and became quite quiet. That was the climax to the fair.

We then adjourned to the Vermilion Hotel, where we had arranged to meet the Brownes, Barwicks, Sommersets, Evans etc. for tea. We were a very jolly party and numbered about fifteen, all English.

After tea it was time for the concert. The latter was a great success. Miss Evans sang two Japanese songs in costume, and Ray's and Wilson's songs were loudly encored. After the concert there were refreshments, and about 11:20 p.m. we retired for the night. Miss Browne, the Barwicks, Ray and myself were put up by some Vermilion tradespeople by the name of Thompson who were very hospitable and made us stay to a good breakfast the next morning. Altogether the whole outing was very successful.