



George and Emma Robinson.

GEORGE WILLARD and EMMA ANN ROBINSON

by Velma Drake

George Willard Robinson was born in Dudley, Massachusetts, June 3, 1866. He came with his parents in a covered wagon, pulled by oxen, to Iowa, and later to the Black Hills. He married Emma Ann Menagh at White-wood, South Dakota, June 11, 1893.

George and Emma lived at Terry, South Dakota, where George worked in the gold mines. Here, three children were born to them: Esther Bernice, Elmer Willard and George Chester. About 1900, the family came to Moorcroft, Wyoming, where George's brother, Lucian Robinson, had settled and was running a general store. Maurice Newton was born while the family was in Moorcroft. In fact, he was the second baby born in Moorcroft.

George filed on a claim on Powder River, seven miles north of Arvada, in 1900. A fellow they called "Hell-roaring Wright" helped Mr. Robinson fence the place, build corrals and build a log house, before the family moved to Powder River in the spring of 1903. For a living, they raised chickens, turkeys and cows. The river meadows grew abundant hay for the cattle and horses. The winters of 1911 and 1912 were hard, and it was a struggle to keep the 20-25 head of cows alive.

An old fellow from Sheridan came down the river about once a year and took orders for groceries, which were shipped from Denver, Colorado.

About 1910 or 1911, Mrs. Robinson was quite sick and had to stay in Sheridan for over a month. Even when she was able to return home, the children had to do much of the work for a long time, as Mrs. Robinson had a bad heart and could do very little.

The Robinsons lived on the east side of Powder River and the road up and down the river was on the west side of the river, so any time they went to Arvada, they had to ford the river to get to the road.

The first year the Robinsons moved to Powder River, Dave Campbell and Mr. Robinson built the log schoolhouse on the west side of the river, about opposite the Robinson place. Dave Campbell lived on the west side of the river, and they had four or five children. Elmer

and Bernice were old enough and although George Chester was only five, he had to go to make enough children to open a school. School was in session for five months that first year. The teacher usually boarded at the Robinson home.

In the winter, the children could cross the river on the ice. In seasons when there was no ice, they crossed on horseback, or if the river had very little water, on foot. At one time, Mr. Robinson built a boat, and for a couple of years, they used the boat quite a bit for crossing the river. One day, Bill Campbell came dashing to the schoolhouse about 2 p.m. and said the ice in the river was breaking up. Maurice Robinson dashed down to the river and jumped across some water to the ice, bobbed out of sight, and then came up on some ice near the other side, where he could get to the bank. He just did get across. If there had been more water in the river, he might not have made it. They took lots of chances on Powder River where they went swimming, fishing and ice skating. Many times, they skated to Arvada and back.

In 1916, Mr. Robinson bought a Model T car. The boys all learned to drive, but Bernice never had a chance, not with three brothers and their father to drive. They had a few narrow escapes driving back and forth to Arvada, and various places on the ice.

The Robinson family was at home on Powder River, except Elmer and Bernice, in late October of 1923, when there was a three-day steady rain. Johnstons were flooded out of their home a mile upriver from Robinsons, and came down to the Robinson place about 4 a.m. Later that same day, as the water continued to rise, they all had to leave the house and go to the hills, a quarter of a mile to the east. Only two horses were near the house at the time. Mrs. Johnston, Gertrude and Mrs. Robinson rode out on the two horses, as the water was knee-deep across the flat, when the six men at the house walked to the hill. Mrs. Robinson's brother, Bill, was visiting at the time. As they left, the chairs began to bob around in the water. Maurice had gone to the hill ahead of the others and located an overhanging rock, which would afford some protection from the rain, and he cut some wood for a fire. There they spent the night. The next morning, the river was receding somewhat. Chester and Maurice rode down to the granary and got a pail of coffee and a saddle, although the water was stirrup-deep across the flat. From the rock on the hill, the whole group of people started to walk and ride to the Horton place, some five miles south, on the road from Arvada east. Mrs. Horton was sick in bed, but they had some greasy pork cooked up and they fed this to the nine hungry people - it sure tasted good.

It took the Robinsons months to get their home fit to live in again. There was from a foot to eighteen inches of mud in the house, which had to be scooped out, bedding, clothes and everything had to be washed. The water didn't quite float the frying pan, with some eggs in it, off the cook stove, which they didn't have time to eat before they left. Luckily, there was a log lodged along the upper side of the house, which saved the windows from being broken. The water came to the middle sash of the windows. As it happened, the artesian well, which ran a small stream of water, was not seriously