

GEORGE H. AND HATTIE [BUCKLEY]  
BYINGTON

My father, George Henry Byington, was born June 1, 1877, one of five children. As a young man, he was an electrician for the Military Soldier's Home at Leavenworth, Kansas. He enlisted in the U.S. Cavalry and served through the Spanish-American War. With Troop D of the 1st Cavalry Regiment, he saw action in the battle of San Juan Hill in Cuba. He was wounded in the right shoulder and in the left jaw. The bullet lodged in his neck, and was too close to the jugular vein for surgery. He was to carry the bullet for the rest of his life. At times, it caused him excruciating pain and near-suffocation. He finished out his enlistment at Fort Yates, receiving his discharge on February 23, 1899. He received a Purple Heart for his injuries.

He re-enlisted in the same cavalry unit, for the Philippine Insurrection, and served in the Philippines under General Arthur McArthur, and in China during the Boxer Rebellion.

Back in the United States, he returned to Fort Yates to again finish his enlistment, and was discharged as a corporal of D. Troop, First Cavalry on March 20, 1902. After his discharge, he drove freight teams on the east side of the Missouri River from Winona to Bismarck. Later, he took a homestead near Fort Rice, where he built a sod shanty for his first home. Four miles to the northeast lived John Buckley and family, including his future wife, Hattie.



Hattie Byington

George Byington

Hattie, also known as Harriet, was born September 26, 1889. She and George were married September 1, 1908, by a justice of the peace in Mandan. George and Hattie lived on his homestead until 1914. It was perhaps the military presence in Dakota Territory, frontier expansion and early reservation life, that eventually led my parents to move to Selfridge, N.D. in 1914. My mother was to receive 26 head of cattle, a team and some farm machinery from the

Indian department, so Dad traded his homestead for a Buick car, an Edison phonograph, and a small amount of money, and they prepared to move to two quarters of land allotted to their sons, James and Charles, located seven miles southwest of Selfridge. There were no buildings on the place, so my parents and three children, Charles, Harriet and me, stayed for a brief time with Mother's sister, Mandy, (Amanda) and her husband, Tom Short, west of Selfridge. That fall and winter, we lived in a cave dwelling with Richard (Dick) Harmon, until spring, when Dad was able to erect a shack for his family on the allotment land.

Dick Harmon, a bachelor, was a near neighbor of the Shorts. Both lived at the foot of the buttes, seven miles west of Selfridge. Harmon, some years later, was auditor of Sioux County.

At the time we moved to Selfridge, not many people were living in the rural area. The immigration of farmers was just beginning. In addition to Harmon and the Shorts, families I can remember include Vern Howe at Maple Leaf; Charles Gayton living a half mile south of Selfridge; Robert Bruce, Charley Bailey, Jim and Sam Gayton, located east and north of Selfridge; and farther north, Charles McLaughlin near Chadwick; Henry Azure, Bill Pamphlin and Claude Dwarf.

During a storm, the winter of 1914-15, all of Mother's cattle strayed. None were ever found.

My father, George, plowed a plot of ground, near their new house, and planted it to corn. It grew nicely until mid-summer. Then blistering heat on the gumbo flat took its toll, and my father decided he was no farmer. That winter, he sent for the two-volume Audel's instruction books on carpentry. He painstakingly made all the dimension and lumber to scale, and built a model house. It was a sturdy building. It wasn't a toy, but we children played with it for several years. In the spring, my father went carpentering. Hattie, my mother, and we children were left isolated on the farm for many days at a time, while my father worked in town, or on house building projects around the country. The nearest neighbor was about seven miles away.

Several houses still remain on which my father worked, including the Smestad house. He also helped build a number of houses in Wakpala, S.D, including one for Mr. and Mrs. Bill O'Hern, a railroad agent, as well as many farm houses and barns.

One time, during the winter, while Dad was working in town, little Harriet became ill, running a fever. Mother, getting more and more concerned about her daughter, was going to send me, an almost seven-year-old, to walk the seven miles to town to get Dad. After bundling me up warmly, and about to send me off, she saw a gray wolf across the creek a few rods from the house. She jerked me back into the house, got a rifle, pointed it in the general direction of the wolf, closed her eyes and pulled the trigger. The brash beast went bounding off. It was the first and only time I ever saw a wolf in this area. There were always a plentiful supply of coyotes and

owls hanging around. Mother changed her mind about sending me to town alone. The next day, she bundled all of us well, put the baby in a box on a sled, and with Mother pulling the sled; me pushing and Charles sometimes walking, sometimes riding on the sled, we set off trudging over the snow-drifted trail into town. The snow was 14 to 18 inches deep. We started out early in the morning and arrived in town, exhausted, in mid-afternoon. The baby was treated and Dad took us back to the farm with team and wagon.

In the fall of 1917, when I was seven years old, Charles, six, it was time to start school, so the family moved into Selfridge to live in a house on the west edge of town, now the Art Sieglock site. It was almost like living in the country. We had a large garden, a cow and some chickens.

If carpentry jobs were unavailable, Dad worked for farmers or at other odd jobs. One summer, he helped repair a dam for the Milwaukee Railroad, near Walker, S.D. The family went along and camped at the work-site.

In the winter, Dad earned extra money, making furniture, some of which were delicately inlaid. He also made macrame pieces.

The family moved to Piedmont, S.D. a small community near Rapid City, in July, 1930. Dad had gone to the Veterans Hospital in Hot Springs, S.D. a year earlier for some medical attention. He returned to Selfridge, then went back to Rapid City and remained to work in that area. Then he purchased some property in Piedmont. Melvin had gone after school to Belle Fourche area to work in the beet fields. When the work gave out, he went to stay with Dad. I had quit school, and was out working wherever I could find work. After the move, the rest of the children finished their schooling in Piedmont. Dad worked as night clerk and handyman at the Patton Hotel in Rapid City for several years.

Dad passed away June 10, 1936 at Piedmont. Mother died August 10, 1951 also at their Piedmont home. Both are buried at the Bear Butte Cemetery at Sturgis, S.D.

There were 11 children in our family. This writer, **James Byington** was born February 31, 1910 at Fort Rice, in my grandparent's log house. I spent 50 years in the newspapering business, 34 of them as publisher and editor of the Timber Lake Topic in Timber Lake, S.D. I served almost four years in the Army with the Fourth Infantry in Alaska and the States and a stint overseas with the American Division in the Philippines and Japan, under General Douglas MacArthur, being discharged in December, 1945. I am now retired and live with my wife, Mary, in Timber Lake. We have two children, James Allen and Patricia Jean, both residing in Lisle, Illinois.

**Charles [Irish] Byington** was born August 22, 1911. Just short of finishing high school he quit, married one of his teachers, Julia Brand, and they had a daughter, Peggy. He and Julia were

divorced. Later, he married Serena Twigg of Fort Yates. They had two sons, Charles and Robert. Some years after Serena's death, he married Josephine (Josie) Charging Eagle and their children are Richard, Laura, Francis, Lillian, Steven and Leonard. After their divorce, Irish married Hilda (Fritzie) (Last name unknown). They had two children, Janet and Thomas. Irish served with the U.S. Seabees during World War II and saw action in southern France and Normandy. He was a carpenter by trade, and worked in many areas, including North and South Dakota, Alaska, some southern states, and Wisconsin. He died May 13, 1977 at Fort Yates. One of his children, Robert is deceased. So are wives, Josie and Fritzie.

**Harriet Byington** was born May 31 at Fort Yates. She died May 25, 1919, in the Deaconess Hospital at Mandan, after suffering a ruptured appendix.

**Arthur "Bush" Byington** was born May 8, 1915. He served with the U.S. Airborne during World War II. He was a rancher, and also served on the Standing Rock Tribal Council. He was married to Rose Babbit of McLaughlin, S.D. Their children are Delaine, Delores, George and Henry. Arthur passed away April 16, 1971. A son, Henry is also deceased.

**Melvin "Bud" Byington** was born June 6, 1917. He was the first child born in the incorporated town of Selfridge. He served 28 years in the U.S. Navy, seeing action in the Mediterranean and Pacific Theaters. He is now retired. He and his wife, Kathleen, live in Jacksonville, Florida. Their children are John, Susan, Judy, Greg and Charles.

**Thomas Byington** was born March 2, 1921. He served with the South Dakota National Guard and the U.S. Army Engineers seeing action in Italy during World War II. He later served a hitch with the Air Force. He was a truck driver. He died November 15, 1955, in a truck accident near Spearfish, S.D. He was married to lone Cottier. Their children are Monica, Thomas Jr., Timothy and Terrance, also Linda Ann, a daughter of lone's by a previous marriage.

**Dorothy "Dolly" [Byington] Baxter** was born March 21, 1926. She lived for a time in Kansas City, Missouri, also in Japan with her service-man husband, Paul Simmons. They were divorced. She has been married to Bernard Baxter, a machinist for General Motors Company, for 25 years. They live with a grandson, David, in Burton, Michigan. Bernard has two daughters by a previous marriage.

**Lawrence "Larry" Byington** born July 16, 1919, served with the Air Force during the latter part of World War II, and a period after the war. He worked in the oil fields and as a ranch hand in Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, North Dakota, and Idaho. He is presently living in Paul, Idaho. Three children, two boys and a girl, passed away in infancy. They, and Harriet, are buried in the Gayton Cemetery (near the Val Jochim farm) at Selfridge.

My father's brother, Warren, who was the youngest member of his family, is still living. At age 95, he makes his home with a granddaughter and her husband in Everett, Mass.

In the John P. Buckley family, in addition to my mother, there were Amanda (Mandy), John, Steve, Joseph, James and Charles. Amanda was married for a time to Tom Short. She later married "Turkey Track" Bill Molash. All are now deceased.

J.P. Byington



Back: Charles, Jim, Dolly, Melvin. Front: Tom, Arthur. Taken 1951. Not pictured-Larry.

### JAMES GEORGE BYINGTON

My paternal grandfather, James George Byington, was a New Englander, who went to sea as a cabin boy in sailing ships when he was 12 years old. At age 14, he enlisted in the Union Army, but due to immaturity was discharged. At the age of 16 years he re-enlisted and served in the Civil War.

After the war, he, like many others, joined the westward expansion, following the construction of railroads in the Midwest. He was married in Minnesota and it was at Atlantic, Iowa, that his son George Henry Byington was born. The family moved on, settling in Newton, Kansas. James was hurt while working on a railroad bridge crew. It disabled him so badly, he spent the rest of his life in the Soldier's Home at Leavenworth, Kansas.

James P. Byington