

We came across without them. Thinking it'd be too much trouble to bring horses. Enough, packing family and everything we'd need. To Canada! Government of Canada was advertising land. And new beginnings were what Belgian farmers needed. The open prairie sparkled in our minds as we prepared to come. Good thing we didn't know how rustic it'd be. And how we'd miss our big black horses.

It's 1918. I'm Alidor Andries. Emma and I farm south of Deloraine. Flossy Lake district. Flossy, is where most Belgian immigrants took land here. We hear about gasoline tractors, but we prefer horses. Tried oxen, but they're too slow for the new seeding equipment. We tried local horses, but find they don't have the stamina. So, I had to go back, to bring over some real working horses! My neighbours liked the idea. Emma and the children could manage things at home. So, in 1910, I went.



**A Belgian horse imported from Belgium in 1910
by A. Andries**

Going back to Belgium, is a common thing for our community. We'd go to encourage relatives to come back with us. Compared to the shortage of land and the depressed economy of Belgium, the prairies are a blessing. Young men go back to Flanders to visit, and return with a wife. I enjoy our garden and orchard. One year I brought back tree stock, and spinach and celery seeds. But to bring horses? That was new. Fortunately, there were folks willing to help.

Some eager immigrants had little money for the journey. So, I offered them free passage if they handled the horses. Feeding. Walking the little

space, we had. Keeping them calm. Talking. Soothing. Keeping their minds busy. Feeling tended to in that claustrophobic, creaking, smelly space.

I'd ask the willing helpers. Do you like the smell of horses? A horse barn in winter smells strong enough. Imagine the hold of an ocean liner, with 20 horses? Tight space? Dimly lit? I love it. But it's not for everybody!

Fortunately, the Belgian is a uniquely quiet horse. It's in the genetics. And, it's huge. When its ears are cocked, it stands 7 feet tall and weighs in at 2000 lbs. So, mind your heels when you've got one on a rope. They're in many shades of brown. Except ours. Flemish Belgians are black. In the horse world, every distinction is a matter of pride.

That we prefer horse power doesn't mean our community is against technology. We're good with our hands and make all manner of equipment to lighten our work. Like last year, we got building our church. St Paul's. Just across from us. I had seen a horse drawn Mortar Mixer, so I took it on as a project. There's a lot of cement holding those stones together. All made with the power of a horse, with a homemade mixer!



Our horses are part of us. Simple as that!

Belgian Power is based on stories in Vantage Points 3 and 5.

David Neufeld