

When Europeans travelled to Manitoba in search of a new life with new beginnings, they were often surprised how their neighbours lived differently, as they too came from another land of unique culture, from the other side of the big waters.

In 1999, James Ritchie interviewed Ninga resident, Nettie Marshall, who travelled with her husband Jim, 1 daughter, 2 sons and a daughter in law from Scotland in 1989.... one married daughter remained in Scotland ... no 1989 is not that long ago!

The bulk of the Scots-Irish immigration occurred in the 1850's to 1915's. Scottish immigrants continued to arrive adding to the character of each community they settled.

For Nettie Marshall, her first glimpse of the western Prairies was through cowboy movies at the theatre in Scotland, which cost only 3 cents. It was during war time, and Nettie was 8 years old, and Roy Rogers films were a big hit.

This is Nettie's story:

"It was our 25th wedding anniversary. I was 38 years old then, not eight. Jim said, "We'll go to Canada and have a look at farms."

We knew no one! There were some seminars by realty companies with land for sale, and we went to those.

In Scotland we had a dairy farm with 60 cows. But we knew that our farm was never going to be big enough for our 2 boys who wanted to farm but we couldn't afford to expand, and 60 cows wouldn't do it.

Three times we came over to Canada looking at different places. We had to buy a farm big enough for three families. The 4th time over we looked at this one, east of Ninga.

Our dairy farm here milks 120 cows. You could say, we sold our farm in Scotland, and by coming to Canada we doubled what we had!

I was involved in so many things in Scotland, like church and the Women's Institute were started here in Canada and the idea was brought back to the UK. The idea is to have an evening to relax and enjoy each other's company, to have an educational demonstration of some sort, perhaps to enhance ideas on cooking and crafts, we might donate money to a handicapped charity.

I find it fascinating how things are different here - the ladies also get involved with the community more, and on the political side more. I can't believe the amount of work they do here. How they take charge of things, and get things done. They put their minds to it, and they do it!

Another thing fascinates me is the number of women playing golf! I didn't know one woman who played golf in Scotland! Oh, there were some I knew but their social life was so different from mine. And, as farmers, we never curled. That was a more social lifestyle than farmers usually- had until we came here.

Yes, the women generally here are more outgoing and have more spirit!

Scots in a New Land was taken from HERITAGE STEW – A booklet of stories and recipes compiled through the Boissevain and Morton Regional Library.

Vantage Points Flashbacks were written by David Neufeld with help from Betty Sawatzky. They were originally aired on CJRB Radio out of Boissevain, Manitoba in the early 2020s.