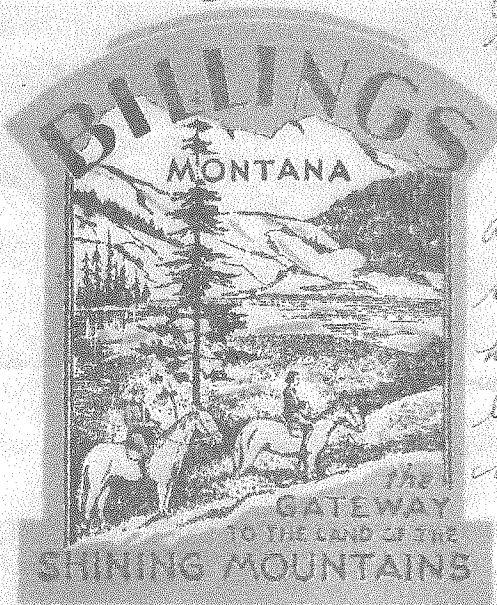


The following reminiscence of Margarethe Torgrimson, the wife of Henry Torgrimson, is dated circa 1938. Two copies are presented here: the original reminiscence in her handwriting and a transcript that has been slightly edited to be more readable.



I was the eighth child out of a family of twelve children. Our home at that time was a large log house sided on the outside & plastered on the inside. It had 3 bedrooms, kitchen, dining room & living room. It was built in T-shape with porch on 3 sides. The barn was very large with rock wall 12 ft high where

all the stock were kept. My father owned nearly a section of land of very fertile ground & lots of timber land.

In 1898 he built a new house. It was very large. Each one of us <sup>3</sup> girls had a room each with a large living room, sup. stairs and the boy had a large room ~~and~~ had also a third story on it which was not used much. Down stairs was a kitchen 16 x 24 & dining room 18 by 18 also a living room 18 x 18 + 9 bedrooms, wash room, & pantry besides all the closets in the house & halls.

In the large room over the kitchen ~~the~~ folks kept winter supplies such as 1 barrel of sugar, 3 barrels of apples, a large sack of green coffee ~~in boxes~~ of creekers' suits etc, and ~~there~~ where all the meat were hung to dry for summer use. Bologna & jerked meat & lard.

When fall came my folks would kill the fattest steer and several hogs and some sheep and ~~the~~ <sup>was</sup> all prepared & stored away for winter. Some made into sausage & bolognas & some for dried ~~meat~~ <sup>or jerked</sup> meats.

I was the eighth child out of a family of twelve children. Our home at the time was a large log house sided on the outside and plastered on the inside. It had three bedrooms, kitchen, dining room and living room. It was built in a L-shape with a porch on three sides. The barn was very large with a rock wall 12 feet high where all the stock were kept. My father owned nearly a section of land of very fertile ground and lots of timberland.

In 1888 he built a new house. It was very large. Each of us three girls had a bedroom each with a large living room upstairs and the boys had a large room. It had also a third story which was not used much. Downstairs was a kitchen 16 x 24, dining room 18 x 18, also a living room 18 x 18, three bedrooms, washroom, and pantry besides all the closets and halls.

In the large room over the kitchen my folks kept winter supplies such as one barrel of sugar, three barrels of apples, a large sack of green coffee, and boxes of crackers, nuts, etc. Here was where all the meat was hung to dry for summer use (bologna, jerked meat, and hams). When fall came, my folks would kill the fattest steer and several hogs, and some sheep. This was all prepared and stored away for winter, some made into sausage and bologna and some for dried meat, or jerked meat.

In the garden we had two rows of currant bushes about 800 yards long. The currants were made into sauce, jelly, and wine. Mother would sometimes make 40 gallons of wine out of wild grapes and currants. All these things were ready for Xmas as we had much company during Xmas.

In our barn yard in the fall were 28 and 30 large stacks of grain and the barn full of hay.

Winters were very severe and the snow drifts were often 10 feet high.

The home place stood in the thickest of red and white oak timber, but after a few years it died out. Father had four rows of evergreens planted on the north and west sides and they are now 20 feet high and so thick through you can just reach around each one.

About the time the new home was built, my oldest brothers Oliver and Oscar were about 24 years old so father gave them a farm each. But Oliver had the wander lust and left for Montana and Oscar took over the farms. I was 10 years old then and it was only eight children left and at home only three boys and three girls.

The schoolhouse was now built on father's land and it was not so far to go to school.

Mother wanted us to learn all things, and we were sent away to learn what we could not be taught at home. Mother kept a maid off and on to help out. My grandmother came and lived with us 25 years and died at 90 years old. Mother kept

books and looked after all of father's business while Father worked and looked after everything that had to be done on the farms.

When my sister was 17, she went away to school. The year she was 18 she was then at the normal at Winona, Minn. She came home sick with the typhoid and brain fever and was sick for two years.

Then my brother Herman dropped a heavy iron on his wrist and crushed it so he had to go to Rochester doctors and have it operated on. But it didn't heal for two years and he could not do much on the farm, so he went away to school at Valpariso, Indiana and from there to Ann Arbor, Michigan, etc. He had three diplomas before he finally settled down as a doctor in Minot, North Dakota.

After finishing school at home, I took up dress making for the home and I was a milliner for awhile. Meanwhile, I married Henry Torgrimson. We stayed in Minnesota for two years—tried to farm it and also tried the photography business. My oldest son was born at my father's home. Then my husband wanted to go West as we had heard through my brother Oliver about the reservation being thrown open for filing in Montana.

Henry went out west to Montana, and brother Oliver helped him get the Lay Ranch which I still have. We had nothing to buy with, so Oliver borrowed the money for us at 12% from Mr. Myers of Red Lodge. We borrowed \$4500. It seemed an awful rush to me.

Henry wrote back to me and told me and said sell everything as everything is here in the house that we need. So they sold every bit of furniture I had, and I had nice furniture but as luck I kept my sewing machine and shipped it. All the rest was sold and went to pay up bills we owed even to my cow that I had gotten from mother. Henry was owing his brother for this and that that I did not know anything about.

So my father gave me money to go to Montana and sent my brother Oscar's car with me as I just got out of a sick bed to go to my husband. For he had set a date to meet me at Columbus, and there were no telephones then so I insisted on going.

I had visited my uncle Simonsen and brother in Montana in 1897 the year before I married, so I knew there would be no way of letting Henry know only by letter and it took too long to get there.

We arrived at Columbus in the night and were taken to a log house, the only hotel in Columbus at the time.

The next morning my little boy was playing by himself out on the rough porch of the log hotel and I sat inside watching him. He got up and ran off the porch and said "papa, papa" and I went out to see. There was Henry walking down the sidewalk, so I called to him and he came back and said why I did not know that child, he walks, he called to me, but I did not know him, then he grabbed the little fellow up in his arms.

Then we drove up to Absarokee in a spring wagon and stayed with Uncle and Auntie Simonsen overnight.

This was in January 1900, and it was so warm I took my gloves off while riding in a spring wagon from Columbus to Absarokee. Next day we left for the ranch. It seemed a long ways up there as the roads lay in the hillside there.

When I got to the ranch, I found the stove and furniture that I had got in place of my new ones that were sold in Minnesota. Was an old cook stove standing on part bucks and part legs with a front hearth and low oven on side so very old. The heating stove was an old box stove with a big crack in both sides so the ashes run out. The table was homemade and just three chairs that had backs on and an old cupboard for the dishes. My beds, all but one, was homemade; and they had ticks with hay in for mattresses with no springs. The one old dresser was without any glass. The house had no door casings and the walls was just the bare log as it was outside.

The house stood in the trees and the timber was thick on three sides of it and it was right on the bank of a roaring river.

I did not say anything, but I thought a lot if we could be happy. I would not complain, and Henry seemed happy.

Brother Oliver bought all the cattle, 90 head. We bought 6 horses, hogs, machinery, and wagons. The wagons were old and rickety, the plow was an old wooden walking plow, mowing machine had one wheel broken in two and wired together. It was only 18 acres plowed into hay and 20 in another place.

The cattle were as wild as wild animals. Oliver rented them to us and we were to take care of them for half of the increase.

We got along all right that winter but in the spring when we turned the hogs out into the alfalfa hay pasture, the hogs all died. Our big bull disappeared and my husband found him in another man's field shot to death that meant \$85 as that was what he cost. All summer we worked together trying to do our own work putting up hay and picking rocks as we had no money to hire help with so Henry pitched hay both ways and I loaded and stacked while our little boy sat on the hay waiting for us to get through. We sowed our grain by hand and plowed what we could with the old broken plow but we couldn't do much. We could not pay one cent on our debt that year.

The timber was full of raspberries and chokecherries and serviceberries. In the fall, we went into the mountains and picked huckleberries so I put up a lot of berries. The fish were so plentiful Henry could go out and in five minutes catch more than we could eat right near the house where the river came rolling in and on around the curve. I had to watch my little boy every minute so he did not get to the river. It was only a few feet

from our door and we had no fence. We raised a nice garden and had loads of potatoes to sell in the fall and Henry hauled them 25 miles to sell them.

Henry had bought two young horses and he broke them. He trained one to hold the calves while he branded them by tying their legs and tying the rope to the saddle horn. He was very proud of the horse and one day one of the other horses kicked him and broke his leg in two places and he had to shoot the horse. Henry took this very hard and the next week the other young horse died. Then every calf we had got that spring got the black leg and we lost 14 calves and seven cows that were old and toothless and we did not know it. We fed all the cattle together and there were two year olds and three year old steers which fought the cows from the feed and we did not realize it as they were all like wild animals.

We tried hard to save them. One younger one we got so well that she could go out into the field and feed but when the high water came, she had gone down to drink and drowned. One calf we had babied and cared for all winter went and hung himself in some bushes that spring.

So we were so discouraged, but that wasn't all the trouble that spring. The fence was in bad shape and not on the line, so we had to put it on the line. Henry said you look after the water and see how if it's irrigating right and I'll drive around with the wire. So he did and it was downhill and our best horse called Nig stepped on one end of a stay and it flew up and the other end ran into the horse's stomach and killed him. I shall never forget it as I was there and saw it. Then we had only three horses left and Henry told Oliver he had better take the cattle and we had just about given up. Henry said we will try it one more year and prove up on the land then turn it all over to the ones we owe—ranch and all and go to Canada.

Then one day we was just having our dinner and I heard a knock at the door and I went and opened the door and there stood Mother and Father. Oh, talk about joy. I cried and laughed in turns as I did not know Mother and Father were coming to visit me. Mother and Father stayed with us for just a short time. Meanwhile they loaned us the money enough to pay up our debts and they told us to stick it out at the farm, as they liked the place very much and they told us our luck would change. Mother said its always best to have bad luck from the beginning.

That fall we bought a sow thinking we could raise hogs. We kept her inside the hog house all winter and took care of her. When she had her little pigs, it was so many; but she ate them up one by one so we took the last and cared for them. When summer came, they were nice and fat so one day I was making chokecherry jelly and took the pits and skin and put it into the little pigs' trough and when I came back to feed them, I found them both dead. I felt so bad about it, I nearly cried and Henry laughed at me and said forget it who would think they would die from that.

Meanwhile my youngest son was born March 8, 1903. There were no doctors within 25 miles of where we lived and the mud was hub deep after the rain and snow we

had that winter and spring so we had a woman by the name of Mrs. Piers help us through this trouble.

Spring of 1904 All that spring I worked with my husband as I had done before. In the morning I would get up as early at four o'clock and feed my chickens and do my baking and often times have my washing out before any of the rest in the house was out of bed. The water to wash with and to be used for cooking and drinking had to be carried from the river up a hill to the house.

By July 4, we had all our crops in, and we had quite a lot broke up for field that year. So my husband said well this 4 we are entitled to go and celebrate like the rest. I was awful tired and would rather have stayed home but we went and we left the children with Uncle and Aunt. They wanted us to go and take in everything and stay and have a good time so we did and we did not get home until early next morning. My husband and children went to bed, but I saw too many things to do so I stayed up working. I went out and found that the horses had broke through the gate and was gone across the river into our grain field. So I called my husband and he got up and I walked with him down to the river. It was so high that it was clear up to the bridge and the bridge was just poles laid on big logs across the center pier and then on to the other side of the river.

It looked vicious boiling up to the bridge edge. My husband went across the bridge and I went back to the house for the children. While I was dressing the oldest boy I heard an awful roar and crash and I waited, but Henry did not come so I ran down to the bridge. It was well hid by all the timber (from the house) and I found that the bridge was gone and I felt sure Henry and the horses had gone into the water. I came back to the house and I started to tremble. I trembled so I could hardly get the children dressed and I could not imagine what to do so I finally made up my mind that I had to do something and I started for the neighbors, which was about two miles off. I carried the baby, and the oldest I led with me.

When I had gotten about half way, I heard someone calling and I looked around and there on a horse was Henry riding towards me. He and the horse had gone in with the pole bridge but he had gotten out safe. I nearly fell over and trembled so I could not speak. For a while the trembling did not leave me and I slept very little that night and the next morning when I crawled out of bed I fell on the floor. I tried again, but my feet refused to hold my weight of 98 lbs so my husband got very much alarmed and he went out and got the horses and took me to the doctor at Columbus 25 miles away. I did not get better I got worse. I got so bad I could not utter one word at times and I could not even sit up. I trembled all over and my limbs was numb. Doctors said I had a tumor on the brain and said I would be paralyzed for life. My husband was told all this but he never said a word about it to me and he was so cheerful and kind.

I was that way all summer. He had hired men to help him with the hay and he did most of the housework, too. My neighbor women came and washed and did up the work once a week.

Towards fall I started to get a little better I could walk again. We took in a teacher to stay with us as our oldest boy was ready for school and had to go three miles to school so she took him to school with her and she helped me with the work at night. I was not strong and had to walk very slow and have help to walk at times.

But by spring I was quite well again and our luck had changed as everything we bought lived and grew. Our pigs that we bought increased so we had so many we could not get sale for them all and the rest of the stock was the same as the hogs. We paid off the debts by as little as \$15. At times, all we could save went to pay for debts.

My husband would go out and work at anything he could get to do any spare time he had from the farm. In the fall he would pick turkeys and make \$6 a day and after work he would sometimes walk home from Absarokee Saturday night 13 miles across the hills. And then he worked for Lee Simonsen and got \$25 a month tending sheep camp and I stayed home alone looking after the ranch and stock for weeks. When night came, the children would hang to my dress until I put them to bed as they were afraid of the dark outside and I had to get all my outside work done before dark on account of the children. Once it became quite late before I got through milking and the oldest boy was crying said he burned his hand and I found out he tried to light a lot of paper he had gathered together on the floor and the match burned him.

My husband finally got a job to clerk in the farmers Co-op store, and we rented the ranch and moved to Absarokee.

We lived there in the house where Mrs. Turkco lives now and it was a very pleasant winter. Hovda's lived near and we had some good times.

We worked hard to get a school. All the old timers done their bit and finally, we got the old log house still standing on Grove Street. We gave plays, dances, and I painted a picture which brought \$35 for the school.

Then one of the officers of the Co-op store had a son he wanted to have my husband's job so Henry lost his job after which many people came to Henry and wanted him to start a store of his own. They said we will trade with you if you start. Henry decided to go into the store business, but he had to mortgage the ranch to get the money to start. I was very much worried over mortgaging the ranch, but it was done and the people that urged Henry to start kept their word and many others came and traded even people from other towns all around. His business grew and grew and he bought out the store building I have now and the business and the Co-op store and one small store in town.

Then came the world war and Henry had bought up all his dry goods for the year (7 carloads of flour, 3 carloads of sugar). His dry goods was lost someway, so he ordered another lot and when the last lot got here the depot agent found the first lot in the railroad warehouse. So Henry kept that also and by that time dry goods had gone up and climbing



also was sugar and flour so he made good and paid up all his debts and was getting along fine.

Then the great plague influenza came and people were sick and dying everywhere. The Jay Hotel was full of sick and Henry kept a car going most of the time to bring the sick food and help. People would be around the store sick and I often told him what if you get sick, but he would not believe it was catching.

Then one day he came home dreadful sick and I stayed up with him and then I was taken down and I had a maid at that time and she was taken sick. So I finally got Mrs. Taylor to come and cook and take care of us during the day and nights we had to get along the best we could.

My boys did not get the influenza and could help a little, but my husband worried and would not stay in bed. Thought he could fight it off and wanted to get back to the store. He became very ill, but he finally got better but not well. The next fall he was taken down again and was so bad all doctors gave him up. He just lived on the dope the doctor gave him. Then the doctor said I must get him out of this climate, so I left for California with him. He had a spell on the train and the conductor and I thought he would die but he lived and off and on it was the same for four years. I did not know when night came at times whether he would live until morning. Seldom did I sleep till after two o'clock and some nights not at all when he had those spells. In the day, he would rest and feel better, but how he hated to stay in bed and give up.

I took him to the coast in winter and in summer back home for four years. We had tried everything.

Then in 1923, our son was attending the Southern California University and we had an apartment near the school and every day after school my son took him out somewhere but March 10, he had a telegram from home and was bound to go home. Said he would be back and for me to stay till he got back.

Shortly after I had a letter from him saying I need you come home I am not coming back.

So I went home and I could see he had failed and I worried a lot cause I was sure he would go.

Then his folks came over from Reed Point and too much visit they left May 31 and he went right to bed and became very ill. June 2 in the evening he called me to him but he had lost his speech. I called the Doctor but Henry passed away.

I could not speak I could not cry it seemed such a shock in spite of all the time I had known it must be some day.

Friends came in to comfort me and all was kind but I could not sleep and next morning just at sunrise the birds started to sing in the trees. It seemed like there must be millions of them then I could cry.

My son in California came home for the funeral but went back shortly after. I went on the ranch to look after things as we had not rented it. My husband had planned on moving up and had bought Hovda's machinery and everything to run it with.

My father came to stay with me but I was not well and had to come home again and father left for his home as I rented the farm and my oldest son took over the store. My oldest son married and six months later then my youngest son married.

Then in 1925 I became very ill and was sent to the Warren Hospital. The Doctor said I needed an operation but he thought I better go to Florida and try to gain. Next year I was operated on.

Then in 1930 I left for Europe.

[The reminiscence continues and tells of her various travels, including a trip around the world.]