

# Slipper's Soliloquies

by Fred Slipper

## From England To Hamilton (con't)

This is a continuation of the story of my father's trek to this country. I ended last week's story noting that dad had sailed for Canada.

As I remember, dad said he ended up in central Canada, at a place called Lake O' the Woods. He tried winter fishing, and I guess he almost froze to death. Then he got a job on the Canadian National railroad, but this wasn't too good either, and he began to wish he was back in jolly ol' England, where he at least had a warm place to stay and three meals a day.

About the time his spirits were at their lowest ebb, he received a letter from my Uncle John. He left England before dad, and he ended up in Hamilton. I never did know why he came so far west. Uncle John told dad to come to Hamilton, as the land was just developing and the opportunities were plentiful. So dad came to the upper Skagit Valley.

Uncle John had started up a shingle mill called the Eagle Shingle Co. I don't remember the actual mill, but the pilings are still standing near Hamilton.

The cedar for the shingles was logged up river. And every spring when the river rose, the cedar bolts would be floated down to the mill. One of dad's first jobs was to supervise the drive. He said the Indians from up river would do the actual log drive, paddling their canoes, and his job was to be the boss.

I guess he had quite a time, as he was just a young fellow over from England. He had never seen an Indian. He, of course, talked funny; that is, he had an English accent. And he didn't understand a word of the Indian dialect. But I guess they got the cedar bolts to the proper destination. And he was happy that the climate in Skagit Valley was so much milder than it had been in Canada.

I don't know just how long they ran the Eagle Shingle Co. Or why they decided to go into other businesses. But they did. Uncle John opened a hardware store and dad started the Hamilton Mercantile Co., right next door.

I have many fond childhood memories of the store. And I remember the inventory including everything from baby diapers to logging boots. I also remember the candy counter and the jelly beans in the glass jar.

My final memory of the store, while I was standing on a chair in the kitchen of our home looking out the window, recalls its entire block going up in flames. I was seven years old then.