

(Lacy Moran and the twisty road)

## **Near Calgary Canada – Fall 1887**

The night had been bitter cold with the promise that winter was not far away. The sky was clear and unstained by smoke or haze. A million stars fought off the approach of the red dawn in the eastern sky, the red dawn with its promise of a change in the weather. Red-sky-in-the-morning brought a real threat to the plans of Canada.

David and his father Jon looked through the kitchen window at the coming day.

“I wished that we were leaving today Pa instead of tomorrow”

“Ya, it will snow soon and it’s time. We always have snow before Christmas”

David was worried for his young wife who was upstairs still asleep in the big feather bed. She would have a baby in January and he wanted to be safely in Toronto before that happened.

At noon a cold, hard wind was blowing out of the east. By then snow was falling and blowing sideways and getting heavier, by dark a full blown blizzard was howling across the Alberta plains.

There was no question of leaving the next day. The snow continued to fall hard and soft for a week. During a short break, David and Jon rode to town and sent a telegram to Toronto explaining to his wife’s parents the reason for their delay. The telegraph wire was intact but no trains were running. The blizzard continued for five more days and the thought of a baby being born in the cozy confines of Saint Francis’s Hospital in Toronto had vanished.

Finally the snow stopped and the sun came out. It had the promise of a good day, a very good day. The date was December 11, 1887 and their little world was about to change.

## **Jacob and Amanda Ericsson**

Jacob Allan Erickson and his twin sister Amanda Jane were born near Calgary, Alberta, Canada in December 1887. Their father, David Allan Erickson was a first generation Canadian whose father and mother had immigrated to Canada from Prussia fifty years before.

The baby’s mother, Jane Aires Erickson had grown up in Toronto and had met David at college. Grandfather and grandmother Aires would have preferred that the twins be born in Saint Francis Hospital but the Alberta winter made travel impossible.

The Erickson family was a bit of an enigma. They were Danish with a Swedish name and they had come from Prussia. Jon Erickson actually thought that he lived in Denmark until he applied for a passport to immigrate to Canada. He wasn’t happy when he learned that

the border had been fixed by treaty the previous year. That was particularly galling to him because of his dislike of the Prussians. Still, he swallowed his pride and accepted a Prussian passport for himself and his family.

By the time that the twins were born, the Erickson family was really quite well off. In his early years Jon had bought land and arranged for Prussian and Danish families to immigrate and work his farms. Only a few years before, oil had been discovered in the area and some of it was on his land.

Jon built a large country house on the farm and a fine townhouse in Calgary. He and his wife joined the new country club and enjoyed a social life with the bankers, farmers and oil drillers of the boomtown. No one on the Alberta frontier cared about your background or who your parents were. They left that kind of snobbery to civilized east. They were young and rich and happy.

David grew up riding horses on the farm. He was a bright boy who got good grades and occasionally caused trouble with his wild ways but in general, he was a good boy. Jon wanted him to have the best education possible and insisted that he go east to college. Despite David's protests, he was packed off to the University of Toronto when he was eighteen years old.

The University was located on a bluff overlooking Lake Ontario. The buildings were gray stone and covered with ivy. Everything else was green. David felt a long way from the wide-open west.

The University was, of course, all men but not far away was the Toronto College for Women. Here, the young women of the western elite prepared themselves for marriage. They learned the graces of music, homemaking and witty conversation.

David studied business in preparation for running the family business. There were regular social events that were coordinated with the Women's school. For his first two years he danced with many pretty things but felt no attachment. He learned such college favorites as drinking too much beer and staying out very late. He and his rowdy friends found places on the waterfront where a girl wouldn't slap his hands away if he was too eager.

His first two summers were spent riding horses on the farm and visiting friends. His boyhood ended in his third summer when his father insisted that he work in the office. If he was going to run the family business it was time to get some experience.

At the fall dance at the start of his senior year, he met Miss Jane Aires and his world changed. She was refined and genteel and she wouldn't tolerate rude behavior. Her family lived near Toronto and before Christmas, she invited him to meet her parents. Her mother and father were second generation rich and had picked up some of the local snobbery. Her mother asked many questions about his family and he never pretended to be anything but a western farmer.

