

me with suitable farm clothes. The Neilson store soon provided the right size of overalls, shirts, work boots and high rubber boots. These proved to be the most necessary item, as this had been a very wet spring, and the mud was a foot deep in the roads and barnyards. After loading groceries from the store, and a set of harrows being sharpened at Pringles blacksmith shop, (then opposite Neilson's store) we set out at a plodding pace for the Hill farm two miles up the Second Concession. This was my first ride behind a team of horses, and I soon learned how



**Coyote Heading To The Mainland** photo by DT

the name 'buckboard' came to be applied to a spring wagon! Addressing my new employer politely as Mr. Hill, he laughed and said his 82 year old father was the only Mr. Hill, so just call him Willie. That ride sealed a friendship which lasted till his early death five years later. Whatever doubts he may have had about the suitability of this little pink cheeked English schoolboy for the heavy farm work, were kept to himself as he introduced me to his two sisters, Becky and Sarah, and his white bearded father in the rocking chair beside the stove. I was welcomed into the home with a warmth I shall never forget, and their kindness made those first few homesick weeks bearable. I had to wait till my own letter telling of my arrival and new location reached England, before my family could reply. My first letter from home arrived a month later, and no mail was ever more welcome!

No time was lost in learning the meaning of 'Chores'. My jobs included cleaning out the cow and horse stables, pig pen and hen house. It was a real revelation to me to

see how much good 'fertilizer' could be produced each day. Climbing up to the mow to throw down hay for the day's feed was fun after that. Then off to gather the eggs from all the curious places the hens found to lay. I gleefully reported that one hen had laid three eggs that day! There was plenty of teasing over my naive ignorance of farm life. But it didn't take long to catch the meaning of all the different farm expressions which sounded so confusing at first. Heifers 'Coming around' and 'Coming in' didn't necessarily refer to their wanderings! And the feisty rooster didn't deserve to be slaughtered just because he did nothing but chase hens all day. Setting the 'broody' hens was a novel experience and the resulting flock of fluffy chickens were an endless source of delight for me. I marvelled at the way each hen could collect her own little family from among that chirping throng. There was nothing but sympathy though for the hen who hatched ten little ducks, then spent her days clucking frantically on the edge,

while her brood frolicked in the muddy barnyard pool. How she ever stood the smell as they snuggled under her each night amazed me.

Milking was the hardest skill to learn. My hands seemed incapable of coaxing more than a trickle of milk from the uncooperative cow, who took one look around at me and promptly put her foot in the pail. But perseverance prevailed, and it wasn't long before I could milk three or four cows each day. My greatest yearning was to drive a team in the field, but Willie felt I was a bit tender to stand walking behind the harrows all day, so had his brother-in-



**Safe From One Nasty Coyote But...** photo by DT