



The First Furrow
watercolor, 1907

THE FIRST SETTLERS

If you approached Stanford 100 years ago, you may have been greeted by a scene like this. The earliest homesteaders arrived in the Judith Basin in the 1880s. The first lands to be settled were the creek bottoms. The Hughes family were early pioneers in the Judith Basin. Gerald Hughes remembers the early settlement:

“Pa got started on his forty-acre homestead here in 1894, but he didn’t stay on forty acres long. There was lots of opportunity. By the time he’d been here ten or fifteen years, he’d built up quite a farm where he raised hogs, cows for milk and beef, grain and vegetables, and put out teams on contract to construction crews and worked a little coal mine on his land.”

*The railroad came in ’07, and the whole town of Stanford was moved a mile or so, to where you’d get off the train right in front of the hotel. The homesteaders flooded in about 1910 or ’12; they’d come to Stanford on two, three railroad cars: furniture in one; the family in one; a milk cow, a few horses, and some pigs in a third. They just kept comin’ and comin’, and lots of settlements sprang up with new businesses and stores, and Pa supplied a lot of ’em with coal out of his mine; and some forgot to pay—I’ve still got ’em on the books.” **

* (Gerald Hughes, *The Range*, Mountain Press, 1990, p. 65.)