

Life at 77 Donnelly Street, Richmond, Quebec
By Viola Elizabeth Hodge
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My father, John Henry Lowry, born May 26, 1899 in Newry, Northern Ireland was the youngest of 7 living children. Grandpa James Lowry had come earlier to Canada and eventually after working hard, had enough money to pay for his wife and remaining small children to come over by boat. They landed in 1912 and settled in Richmond, Quebec.

James & Selena Lowry lived in the only house on Mulvena Avenue. James was in the Masons and in time became sworn in as a Justice of the Peace. Grandpa was always proud of the initials JP after his name. His first wife, Selena Clark died soon after they emigrated from Ireland. James then remarried another lady, Lena who also died, and his third wife, was Lena Quilliams. She was my step-grandmother but a lovely warm and generous lady who really baked lots of wonderful things for all us kids. Grandpa James Lowry walked to work as a supervisor of the Grand Trunk Railway Station in Richmond, which was a junction town.

Daddy had only Grade 4 education but immediately began to work at a Sash and Door factory learning to be a carpenter. In time, he was able to join his father and work for the railroad as well.

77 Donnelly Street was a one-roomed school house called a consolidated school and located in the Catholic end of town and it was up the lane from Grandpa Lowry's home. It was built in 1862. It had a partial loft upstairs where the school teacher would stay and live. There was a partial lot adjacent to it which was the school ground for the children to play in. Daddy was single at the time and working, so he bought the school, partitioned it, and rented it out to earn income. As he changed tenants over the years, he worked on improving the house. He had it all paid for long before he met and married Mummy.

Daddy adapted the loft into a second story. He added a back door entranceway we called the shed, and then he added a wood shed after he was married because we had a wood stove in the kitchen for heating and cooking. A while later, he put a coal furnace into the basement and the chimney came up beside the outside wall through the living room to the second story. He made a coal chute also in the basement. The basement of the house was dug out.

A few years later, he built the whole front porch veranda onto the house. It had windows on each end and all across the front. It was quite a chore to always clean those windows. He made them all and they had screens for some of them too. Mummy hung her clothes to dry in this porch during the winter. They would freeze and then she'd bring them in near the heating register to dry. Frozen

clothing would dry a lot faster when brought indoors. During the summer, clothes were pegged out on lines in the yard. She had one long line and one short one.

My parents were introduced by Grace Archibald who was a senior caregiver. She lived in Richmond but helped do eldercare all over the region. She was related to the Sinclairs who lived across from the driveway on Donnelly Street. Mrs. Archibald told Daddy she knew a nice girl that he should meet and she then made it possible. At this time, Daddy had a motorbike and a car.

Mummy was Rachael Agnes Greenlay whom he called Babe because she was the baby of the family. She went by Agnes as she didn't like Rachael. My mother, Rachael Agnes was born April 28, 1913 and lived in Greenlay village, at the dam from the Canada Paper Company mills where William S. Greenlay, my maternal grandfather worked. This was 10 miles from Richmond. Daddy was 14 years her senior and after they became engaged, they married on Sept 30, 1936 at Windsor Mills United Church, in Windsor Mills across the river from Greenlay. She wore a royal blue velvet gown with long sleeves that had cut outs, and blue suede shoes. After he was married, Daddy was made to sell his motorbike by Agnes, so he then had just a car.

Because Mummy had higher education, she always took care of the paycheques and all the household bills. She really was the secretary and answered all correspondence they needed. My father tried hard to improve his reading and writing but his spelling was atrocious. He could easily sign his name. She would read documents and letters aloud and ensure he understood everything he was needed to sign. He had complete trust in her. Agnes would allow him enough money each week to buy his cigarettes.

I was born in Sherbrooke Hospital, Sherbrooke, Quebec on Sept 18, 1938 and was the eldest of four children. My mother knew someone named Viola, and there was also a school teacher named Viola Noble whom I had in primary school. Elizabeth was given to me after the Queen Mum. It later transpired that my husband's mother's name was also Viola Margaret Hodge. Russel Stuart was born in July 6, 1940. William John was born June 1, 1942 and Bruce Edward was born July 10, 1947.

Daddy created 4 bedrooms upstairs and a big hall where the stairs were. He also built a bathroom upstairs by taking some space from the master bedroom and a lot of space from my bedroom.

Each winter, to save \$\$\$ and so Daddy wouldn't have to supply coal for two houses, Grandpa James Lowry and his then wife would drain their pipes, and close up the house and move to up 77 Donnelly Street to live with us. It allowed Daddy to do elder care for his parents keeping them in his own home. I remember they would always load the piano onto metal rollers and planks and push it up the lane and into our house. Saturday nights maybe twice a month,

Grandma Lowry would play piano, the railway men would play guitar and violin, and we'd hold square dances in the kitchen of the house. Mummy would prepare sandwiches and cookies. As kids, we got to stay up as late as 9:30pm. Neighbours from nearby would come to dance to the music.

Each spring, my grandparents James and Lena Lowry would then trek back to their own home with the piano once the weather warmed up. Daddy would make all our toys from wood: rocking chair, kindergarten table and chairs, pull toys, windmills, dolls carriage, highchair, dolls swing, and he made my crib. All four of us slept in it. He wired the springs himself to save \$\$\$.

Walking along the tracks from work to home, Daddy would often pick up pieces of stray coal which had fallen along the tracks. He would always take a thermos and a lunch to work but had two burlap bags he'd carry as well to hold the coal he'd find. As a small child, Russell and I often accompanied him or would go to meet him along the tracks. We would then be given a bag and taught to collect stray coal for our own home to supplement the heating coal.

Daddy bought the partial lot adjacent to our house as well. This was turned into a vegetable garden. He tilled it & planted vegetables but Mummy tended the garden. She would preserve all the harvest & pickle some of it. I well remember having to help Mummy with the preserving. My brothers got off scott free. It sure was a lot of work and I knew I'd never want a vegetable garden of my own. Daddy built her a cold storage in the basement and she'd have the potatoes and carrots in burlap bags there. As kids, we used to wash the potatoes and carrots and dry them before they went into the cold storage. Her jams, jellies and pickles were also down there.

James Lowry died before my step-Grandmother did. In his will, his house was left to my father and Aunt Mary who lived in Montreal and later Willowdale because they were the only two of his children who married protestants. Grandpa was a staunch Orangeman and a Mason, fairly high up, so he didn't approve of his other children who married Catholics. I still have his regalia. Grandpa retired from the Grand Trunk Railroad, before it became CN.

My Dad was a stationary fireman responsible for starting the fires in the engines, & making sure the water and coal were supplied to all trains for their daily trips. He also learned how to move the engines from the tracks to the coal chutes and over to the water tower to be filled ready for the engineers to get going. On weekends, he had to clean the cabooses. Cabooses were used for the engineers, firemen, and conductors to sleep in. They would have two or three levels of bunks in them enough for two engineers, a fireman, & two conductors. Trains were both freight and passenger trains. The same type of engine was used for both.

Daddy retired from CN in May 1964 at the age of 65. After he retired, he would often take my son, Ian down to the railway. Ian was very interested in trains. Grandpa only had Grade 4 education but was a good carpenter and made lots of model trains and things for my two children. My mother finished high school and attended business college 4-5 months when her mother died. She then had to quit college and come home to keep house for her father. Grandpa Greenlay worked for the Canada Paper company printing paper with woollen blankets on the big rollers. The worn blankets would then come home to be used on our beds. We had quilts too which were all handmade. Aunt May Beatty Caswell, mummy's aunt showed us how to knit, embroider, and make quilts. She lived with her daughter, Hazel who married a fellow, Raymond Frizzell who was a house builder. He had two previous children before he married Hazel. He was the man who loaned me \$1200 to be able to go to Teacher's College in St. Anne de Bellevue when I graduated high school.

Daddy died on March 17th, St. Patrick's Day, 1989 and Mummy died Christmas Day, 1998? My brother, Russel died the week prior to Mummy. The house was left to Billy, my brother. Upon his death, July 11, 2009, we went home to begin clearing it out and to sell it.

77 Donnelly Street was sold to the Real Estate agent who renovated it for resale. A new kitchen was put in by her husband and his brother. Then they resold it to Mr. & Mrs. Jacques Blaquiere. Jacques is keenly interested in the history of the house (819) 826-1414. As soon as I can find the papers pertaining to the house, my son, Ian and I will deliver them to Richmond for copying.

I, Violet Elizabeth Hodge bought my house at 178 Arthur Street, Amprior, Ontario K7S 1A4 and moved in May 8, 2010. Tel. (613)622-1339