



# Chapter Two

## Grampa's brothers & sisters after 1900 Most of the brothers emigrate to Canada

**Asher**, born in 1873, was, among other things, a popular singer and whistler. He performed in local gatherings such as the soirées in the great room of the William Long family's Garford Manor (apparently to the disapproval of his Strict Baptist parents). Asher was also reported to have "had the education", but his tendency to "talk Berkshire" and not pursue his education would not have helped his status in the family. He does not appear at Venn Mill in the 1891 census, so he must have left home by the age of 17. He does appear in that census at the home of his Uncle Charles (Collins) at Bridge Farm, West Challow. The apparent "black sheep", he married Mary Elizabeth Herman in 1895, reportedly from a nearby Sutton Courtenay family found unacceptable to William and Sarah. They moved to Ceylon, Saskatchewan in 1905 and to Panorama Ridge in Surrey, B.C. in the early 1930s, near his brothers in Vancouver. Mary was reportedly a real "live wire". She played piano well, giving her piano to niece Elsie (my mom) before her death in 1936. In his later years, Asher had a companion (Hilda) who lived across the street. Although she was rarely around on the occasions when the family visited, she was obviously a good friend, and in spite of some members of the family's view of this as "scandalous", she was a great support to him until his death in 1972.



**Frederick**, born at Venn Mill in 1876, appears in the census of 1901 as a miller at the Upper East Hanney Mill, living with his sister Molly and cousin Elizabeth Collins. The census sheet shows neighbours as the Dandridge family (Lower East Hanney Mill) and the Henry Ireson family, whose son Allan married Gramma Emma's younger sister Alice. He married his cousin Minnie Simmons in 1907 and in 1908, he emigrated to Kerwood, Ontario (30k w. of London, On). According to homesteading documents, he farmed with Grampa at Earlie, Alberta between 1909 and 1912, working part-time with the CPR in Edmonton. Homestead records indicate a "non resident wife" from 1909. (Other records showed him as resident in Kerwood, Ont. about the time of Grampa's family immigration). Except for residence later in Vancouver, these are the only Canadian records I have found, other than family verbal

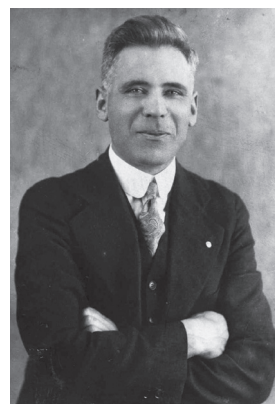


history. He apparently visited his wife in the interim, as Minnie gave birth to a son, Dennis, in 1914 (see below). Soon after, Frederick left his family and moved to Vancouver, purchasing land in Coghlan, BC (Langley area), visiting Grampa and the family from time to time. The next evidence we have of his whereabouts are photos with the Vancouver family: Donna and Ann at 1 year and 2 years old (ca. 1938). We have a letter from him to his sister Ruth, following mother Sarah's death in 1938. He died in 1945 in Vancouver and is buried in Ocean View Cemetery.



### Dennis's Story

*Dennis' life is particularly interesting to us, since with the exception of Mary Irish (née West – Percy's daughter), he was the only grandchild of WWW and Sarah who remained in England. Dennis was born in 1914. Thereafter, family history has Fred "abandoning" his wife and son and returning to Canada. We have a photograph (above) of WWW's Sunday School class in Heathfield from about 1918 which shows Dennis (front row, 2nd from left, and his mother Minnie (second row, far right). Oxfordshire cousin Dan Pepler remembers Dennis as a simple sort of vagabond who lived for a time with gypsies, roaming Oxfordshire and beyond, staying in barns at night. They remembered that he had left home around age 12, then disappeared for 20 years. They also remember his funeral which Doreen attended. England cousin Roger Barker, who is a coroner, also remembers burying Dennis at Malmesbury in 1982, and from him we have the burial records. Although we were unsuccessful at finding his grave during a visit there, Malmesbury Town Clerk James Whittleton very kindly sent a photograph of the headstone there, which read as follows: "In loving memory of Dennis F. West 1914-1982 his parents Fred and Min West and Aunt Hetty Simmons. The Lord knoweth them that are his" (unusual wording since it is not clear whether any of the family members were interred in this plot – certainly Fred wasn't). Somewhat surprisingly, his Aunt Emma included Dennis in her will of 1940.*



**Heber** was born in 1886 at Venn Mill. He appears in the census of 1891 (4 yrs old) with his siblings Frederick (16), Percy (13), Elsie (11), John (9), Molly (Mary 6) and Ruth (6 mo). His older brothers Will (22) and Asher (18) seem to have "left the nest" by this time. In the 1901 Venn Mill census, Heber was 15 years old and the older family members had dispersed considerably. He and Ruth (10 years old) were still at home. Family history has them as very close. Ruth was lame from birth, and he took special care of her. He probably named his first daughter Ruth (Arlet, born 1920) after her. Sarah and oldest son Will (31) were also at the mill in 1901. In the 1901 census, his older brother Asher was listed as an "engineer" at Bridge

Farm, Challow, living with cousins in the Collins family. At this point, Grampa was fighting in the Boer War. Clearly there was discussion in the family about going to Canada in these years and they must have held Heber's interest as well. Heber sailed to Canada on the "Lake Manitoba" in early 1906. The census of 1906 shows Heber in Alberta in service with the Cresswell family of Namao, Alberta (near Edmonton). This discovery is of great significance since his brother John (Grampa), with wife Emma and babies Jack and Elsie, arrived in Namao in early April of 1908. Why they would emigrate to a tiny community like this had been a mystery to me until the discovery that Heber had been with this prominent family in Namao a year or more before and had undoubtedly made that connection. Shortly thereafter, Heber made his first homestead application for land in southern Alberta (NE-4-32- 21-W3), in July of 1906. His address by this time was Beaverlodge, Alberta (near Grande Prairie). In 1910, he applied for a homestead in the area just west of Grande Prairie (NW-10-71-8-W6), and over the next 4 years, after successfully completing homestead requirements for this land, he received a patent (ownership) in 1915. By July of that year, he returned to Edmonton to enlist in the CEF 66th Battalion and sailed for England on Sept. 11. While in England on leave, a family story tells of him proposing to a cousin, Mercy Smith, who subsequently turned him down. He sailed to France with his unit (9th badge Machine Gun Company) on April 1 of 1916. In each of the following years, he had a 2 week leave of absence to England, during which he would most likely have visited his family. I have his complete war records from 1916-1919, but they don't give any details as to what battles he actually fought in. On December 27, 1918, he was promoted to the rank of Corporal (although his gravestone says "Sergeant") and was awarded the Canadian Army Class A Medal. What is particularly clear, however, is that in spite of several hospitalizations for Trench Fever, he spent at least 3 years in that "horror", and these years likely had a profound effect on his life in the years to come.

At this point, dates are bit confusing, since one document shows him marrying Ellen Victoria Lawrence in 1918, but not returning to Canada from the war until March of 1919. In any case, at some point, he had met and married Victoria in Grande Prairie and settled on their homestead just south of Wembley, Alberta (NW-10- 71-8-W6). In the same year, he applied for a soldier's grant for this property and in 1920, Ruth (Arlet) was born. His connection with his Canadian brothers continued with brother John listing Grande Prairie as his intended address after military discharge. This, however, never happened since John (Grampa), a victim of mustard gas in Belgium, was advised by his doctor to move to the "healthier" climate of Vancouver. In 1922, Heber and his new family moved to Vancouver,

where Robert was born in 1924. Heber worked at Canadian Cannery, the family living at 2326 W. 4th Ave. in 1925 and 733 Nicola in 1926. In 1928, his wife “Vic” left him and the children. For about a year, the children lived in foster care, visiting with Gramma Emma and Grampa John on the weekends. Vic wanted Arlet to stay with Heber and Robert to come with her, but Heber insisted that the children stay together. A year later, Heber’s niece (my Aunt Edna) delivered the children to their mother in Calgary. It seems that the family was never reunited. Heber’s life problems seem to have been augmented by the loss of one of his Grande Prairie lands (NE- 33-70-8-W6), which was repossessed by the Soldier’s Settlement Board in 1929. It’s not clear what became of his 3 other homestead lands. Between 1928 and 1930, Heber lived at 1125 Davie and 776 Homer. He is not listed in Vancouver between 1931 and 1934 but reappears in the directory from 1935 to 1944, residing at 1243 Alberni and continuing to work at Canadian Canneries, where other family members had worked.

As sad as many aspects of his life were, Heber seems to have maintained a relationship with his brothers Asher (Cloverdale), Frederick (Coghlan), and he appears fairly often in photos and is mentioned in gatherings of his brother John’s family (Grampa and Gramma). It appears that Heber was involved in getting Grampa John and his family settled in Canada, and I’m sure that Grampa and Gramma never forgot. Heber died on June 14, 1944. Funeral services were held at Center & Hanna Chapel, and he was buried in the soldier’s plot in Mountain View Cemetery. Arlet remembers our family visiting her during a trip to Alberta from our home in Trail in 1951. On the way we stopped at a farm near Cranbrook where we visited her when she was in service to a family there.



## Family members remaining in England

**William Daniel (Will)** was born in 1869 at the Ham Mill in Wantage. Percy remembers letters which described him getting lost in the wilderness of Canada

and lighting three bonfires to stave off the wolves. Needless to say, mother Sarah and the family were very worried. WWW sent him money to come home, which he did shortly thereafter. His life was spent at first as a miller at Marcham, and sometime after 1925 as a pig farmer in Drayton. In a letter I received from geologist Alan Stoyel, he outlines the process of procuring a mill tenancy. The miller petitions the mill owner with an offer of rent for a defined period and the owner either accepts or rejects it. Stoyel describes a 1901 document in which Will petitions for such a tenancy at Marcham Mill (£50 for 2 years) and WWW guarantees payment. It is not until 1909 that the owner responds with a £30 per year offer of his own, which Will accepts. These documents and the adjacent newspaper clipping give us an idea

## The Herald DATELINE

100 Years Ago (ca. 1904)  
The swine fever regulations

— William West, sen., and William West, jun., millers, of Ven Mill, Garford, were summoned at the borough police court on Tuesday for bringing four pigs into an infected circle in the borough. Mr West said he sent the pigs to the railway station on their way to Warwickshire. He wrote to the inspector asking if he could send them to Coventry, and received a reply saying that he could. He did not send the pigs until a few days later, and by that time fever had occurred within the borough, but he was not aware of it. Inspector Heath said he had taken every necessary step to make the restrictions known. Fined 2s 6d and 14s 6d costs. Mr West then complained that the costs were most extravagant. The Clerk pointed out that they were made up according to scale.

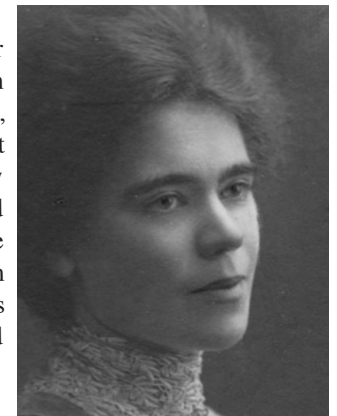
what a “hands-on” father WWW was. I have Will’s Electoral Registrations for him from the Parish of Sutton Wick (Drayton) in 1925, 1935 and in 1939. Mary Irish described him as a big, loveable man with a thick Berkshire brogue. He married Eleanor (Polly) Winter at Abingdon in 1903 and at Drayton, he was in charge of a large pig farm. Like Auntie Edna and Uncle Ken, both Will & younger sister Molly had severe glaucoma and were virtually blind at the end of their lives.



**Percy** was born in 1877 and, like all of his brothers and sisters, he went to Garford School until he had learned as much as he could from the teachers. He helped out teaching the younger children for a time, and at thirteen, wanting to get on with his life, he took a job as a grocer’s assistant (probably Peter Hatton’s store in Garford). His father, knowing he was capable of better things, put a stop to this and apprenticed him to an engineering pattern maker. His artistic skills can be seen in his pencil drawings, as in his self portrait on the left. The 1901 census has him living with his sister Molly in Horsham. Percy told me a story about planning to accompany Grampa to the Klondike around 1897, but he was discouraged from

doing so by WWW, who when passing by him in a hallway at Venn Mill said, “Get a return ticket, boy!” He married Letitia Oldacre in 1903, and they had Mary in 1904. He continued as a pattern maker at Nalder’s works in West Challow, near Wantage, until 1913. Mary told me a story of Percy having an emotional breakdown and wandering lost in the Letcombe Downs, and finally finding his way back using the Wantage Parish Church bells for direction. In 1915, for health reasons, he took a poultry farm in Heathfield, Sussex, near his parents. The poultry market suffered during the war, and so the farm failed. In 1916 he found work in Birmingham. He returned to pattern making in about 1930, retiring in 1943. After Letitia’s death in 1951, he married again to Miriam Smith (a distant cousin). Looking back to his days at Venn Mill, Percy only remembered one occasion in which the entire family was together there. He died in 1975 and is buried in Grove Strict Baptist Chapel Churchyard with Miriam. Among his many legacies are the cassette recordings of his memories of Berkshire. I have Mary Irish’s early 1970s recording of several “interviews” of Percy telling stories from his youth at Venn Mill. I’ve transcribed them as Appendix I at the end of this book. They are just too precious not to be included. The reader can also hear the original tapes online at: <http://bruce-more.ca/percys-stories-2/>

**Emma Jane**, because she died so much younger than her siblings, we know the least about her. “Empsey” was born in 1871, and she stayed in England, along with her 3 sisters, while most of her brothers emigrated to Canada. She went to Miss Bailey’s School in Wantage, as did her sister Molly and later Mary Irish. Miss Bailey was a Lady much beloved by many generations of girls and women in that area. As the eldest daughter, Emma was somewhat of a second mother in the family. She was known for her work with the sick and is remembered as a kind older sister who loved to cycle around





the countryside. She was in service in various households during her life. The census of 1891 has her at St. Peter and St. Paul Church in Marlborough, and in 1901 in Croydon. She was with Molly at her shop at 45 West St. in Horsham in 1911 and subsequently served a lady in Sussex for a number of years. She died in 1940 and is buried at the Strict Baptist Chapel at Heathfield.

**Elsie Sara** was born in 1879 and as a young woman went to school in Nottingham, living with her Uncle John and Aunt Esther Aldworth. John was the head of the tram system in Nottingham at the end of the 19th century. The 1901 census shows her as a boarder in Farnham, Sussex. Elsie became a successful businesswoman who owned 3 stores (millinery, dresses, draperies) in Guildford. In 1920, she sold her businesses & became involved with the CAWG (Christian Alliance of Women and Girls), an organization founded in 1920 by a group of women concerned for the social and spiritual needs of young single women working in cities. Like her unmarried sisters, she lived in a generation of young women who discovered that there were, quite simply, not enough men to go around, and the statistics confirmed it. After the 1921 Census, the press ran alarming stories of the 'Problem of the Surplus Women – Two Million who can never become Wives...'. These women were forced, by a tragedy of historic proportions, to stop depending on men for their income, their identity and their future happiness. Auntie Elsie acted in various administrative posts in these institutions in England and Wales, appearing as a Superintendent (ostensibly in a CAWG office) in 1939. She spent her last years with Ruth in Heathfield, Sussex and then in Eastbourne, reaching her 100th birthday in 1979, an event which several members of the Vancouver West family were able to attend. The family archives in my possession contain a message of greeting from Queen Elizabeth on that occasion. Elsie died that same year and is buried in the Heathfield Strict Baptist Chapel churchyard.



**Mary** (known as "Molly"), born in 1884, went to Miss Bailey's School in Wantage and later also to Nottingham. It seems there is a history of millinery schools in Nottingham. A Google search yielded no less than four millinery training programmes there, including a college course and a university course. In any case, Molly emerged as a clever milliner and had a millinery shop in Horsham, also creating window and wedding displays. She lived in Reading with her parents when they left Venn Mill and later in Horsham with Emma. For a period including the Second World War, she lived on



the top floor of the beautiful Manor House in Mayfield, Sussex. She filled it with antiques, and Mary Irish remembers spending vacations with her there. After the war, she lived in Grove until she died in 1965. She is buried with her family in the Strict Baptist Chapel churchyard at Heathfield, Sussex.

**Ruth Naomi** was born in 1890 and went to school in Guildford, living with Elsie and later working in Elsie's business for a time. She was very close to Mary Irish when Percy's family lived "just down the road" during the First War. After WWW's death in 1924, she lived with and helped her mother Sarah at Heathfield. She married John Cook in 1933 and lived in Calne, where her husband was Deacon at Zion Chapel. After John's death in 1948, she moved back to Heathfield, reaching her 100th birthday in 1990.

We also have a message of greeting from Queen Elizabeth on that occasion. The Vancouver cousins who visited her will remember her little summer cottage in the back yard of Steventon, Broad Oak. She died that same year and is buried with her parents and sisters in the Heathfield Strict Baptist Chapel churchyard. I first met her in 1970, and in my most recent visit of 2017, I met Margaret Cottingham, a member of the Heathfield Ebenezer (Strict Baptist) Chapel congregation who assisted Ruth in her final years.



Eleanor, Sarah, Emma, Will, Molly, Heber, WWW, & Ruth at Venn, ca. 1897