



# Chapter Seven

## The move to Vancouver and Depression years

A soldier land settlement railway certificate (#25459), dated June 26, 1919, enables J.A. West (age 37) return travel from Edmonton to Calgary (pte #279533 Battalion 218, a subdivision of the 8th battalion, age 37, discharge certificate #39). We know that the family left Edmonton for Calgary in 1919 and the transportation ticket was probably provided by the war department for vets, probably related to medical treatment for Grampa's lung problems.

The family stayed in Calgary (where Ruth was born on May 29, 1919) for only a few months before moving to Vancouver. The first home was on Beatrice St. near Victoria Rd. and Kingsway.

In 1920 they moved to the "Stone House" near Elliot St. & 56th Ave. (see [Elsie, Edna and baby Ruth on the porch in photo on the left](#)), and in 1922 to 161 62nd Ave E. (see [family photo on page 49](#)), where they lived for six years. With the family complete and the tribulations of failed farming and war behind, Gramma found an opportunity to return to England in 1927 to visit her family. After her return, they faced the Depression years, but Elsie was regularly employed as a teacher at Brighthouse School on Lulu Island and able to contribute significantly to the less regular income of Grampa and the older brothers.

Some of the more interesting artifacts that I have found in my parents' effects over the years were 50 letters written between Mom and Dad (Bill More) in 1931-1932, before their marriage. At that time, Dad was taking a year as a student minister in Boston Bar (also serving Yale and Hope), while Mom was teaching in Richmond. The letters contain fascinating tidbits of life in Vancouver at that time. Mom commuted by tram from the family's home at 2415 Dunbar St to Bridgeport School. She describes the intense cold while walking on the bridges, or waiting for the "cars" in the dead of winter. Her full time job brought in needed financial help for the family in such difficult years. In 1931, the Richmond School Board cut teacher's salaries, but agreed to a "scaled" cut so that the lower earning teachers had a smaller percentage cut. An interesting regulation of the time mandated that as soon as Mom married Dad (in 1935), she would have to give up her teaching job. Her interactions with parents and siblings in the Dunbar home, where they had moved only 2 years before, must have provided an important base for the nodal family years of teen-age growth: Ken and Ruth - higher education, Edna & Harold - career beginnings, Mom, Phil, Fred and Jack - "departure from the nest" (Jack married Margaret in 1928). One evening, Mom went to Jack and Margaret's for dinner, but Jack was late getting home due to a particularly large job (moving furniture and pianos for Finches Transfer). "Uncle" is mentioned on several occasions. I assume this to be Grampa's brother Heber, since he lived nearby. A letter from

another of Grampa's brothers, Fred, invites the family to visit his farm in Coghlan (Langley) and to see his new fruit orchard. There is no mention of brother Asher or his wife Mary, who at that time also lived in Langley (Panorama Ridge). Grampa is mentioned, fixing a burst pipe or putting a new felt on a sticking piano key. He also seems to have been a current affairs resource for Mom. Mom asked him about the "fuss in Manchuria", referring to the Japanese invasion of September, 1931. Gramma seems to have been in and out of poor health, and Mom describes the pressures Gramma is under "in these difficult (Depression) years".

There is an amusing description of Harold singing ("or whatever you call it") while his Mom plays the piano. It seems that sibling "cheap shots" happened 90 years ago also... Along with Edna, Harold seems to have been in Mom's large social circle at the time, although there are occasional games of bridge with Ken and Fred, and visits with now-married Jack and Margaret. Harold partakes in a mock trial put on by the Young People's group and is found guilty of "robbery with violence". One afternoon, Margaret takes 11-year old Ruth to see Will Rogers in "Business and Pleasure" at the Orpheum. Mrs. Baker (a close neighbour dating back to Edmonton days) seems to be active in the family's social life also. She and Edna throw a surprise birthday party for Mom on Feb. 12. Mom mentions best friend Eva Fleming, now married to Bob, a well-employed fireman, telling of their "fancy new radio" that has 10 tubes! There is much description of youth activities including hiking & tennis (Dad's groups play "tennis quoits"), and of course Fred and Harold have begun their life-long addiction to golf and racquet sports.

The West home was frequented on Sundays by a number of close friends and relatives, notably Charlie and Vera Baker, and of course Heber, Frederick and Asher and wife Mary. On those occasions, the house was filled with song, the voices of Phil and Fred being particularly remembered. In 1928 they lived for short periods of time on 71st Ave. in Marpole and later on #18 Rd. on Lulu Island. From 1929 until 1937, they lived at 2415 Dunbar St. These were the Depression Years, but both Grampa and Uncle Jack were fortunate enough to work on the "new" Vancouver City Hall and Burrard Bridge (opened in 1937). This employment and increasing support from the rest of the siblings seems to have given Gramma and Grampa the freedom to travel together to England for an extended 6 month visit. Part of the attraction must have been the coronation of 1937. Upon return, they moved to 3040 7th Ave, near Balaclava & Bayswater St.

Gramma's remaining short years, although dampened by her increasing illness, were brightened by the marriages of her children and the arrival of the first grandchildren. However, we are all left with the sadness that we didn't have time to get to know this wonderful woman. Ann remembers when Gramma got sick, that the kids were not allowed inside. Instead, Grampa put up an old heavy canvas tent on a wooden base just outside, so that John, Bill & Ann could play there while their mom and dad visited. In 1941, after a lengthy illness, Gramma died and was buried in Forest Lawn Cemetery. Grampa lived on with various members of the family, and during those years he travelled frequently, including several trips to Hawaii and the Caribbean. We were all blessed by the 30 years more that we spent with him. He died in 1973 and was buried alongside his beloved Emma.

And so the "odyssey" of the West family continues with all us "Kuzzins" and our families. The success of the West brothers and sisters has been legendary. Grampa and Gramma's descendants are all over western Canada to prove it, and the family just grows & grows.

