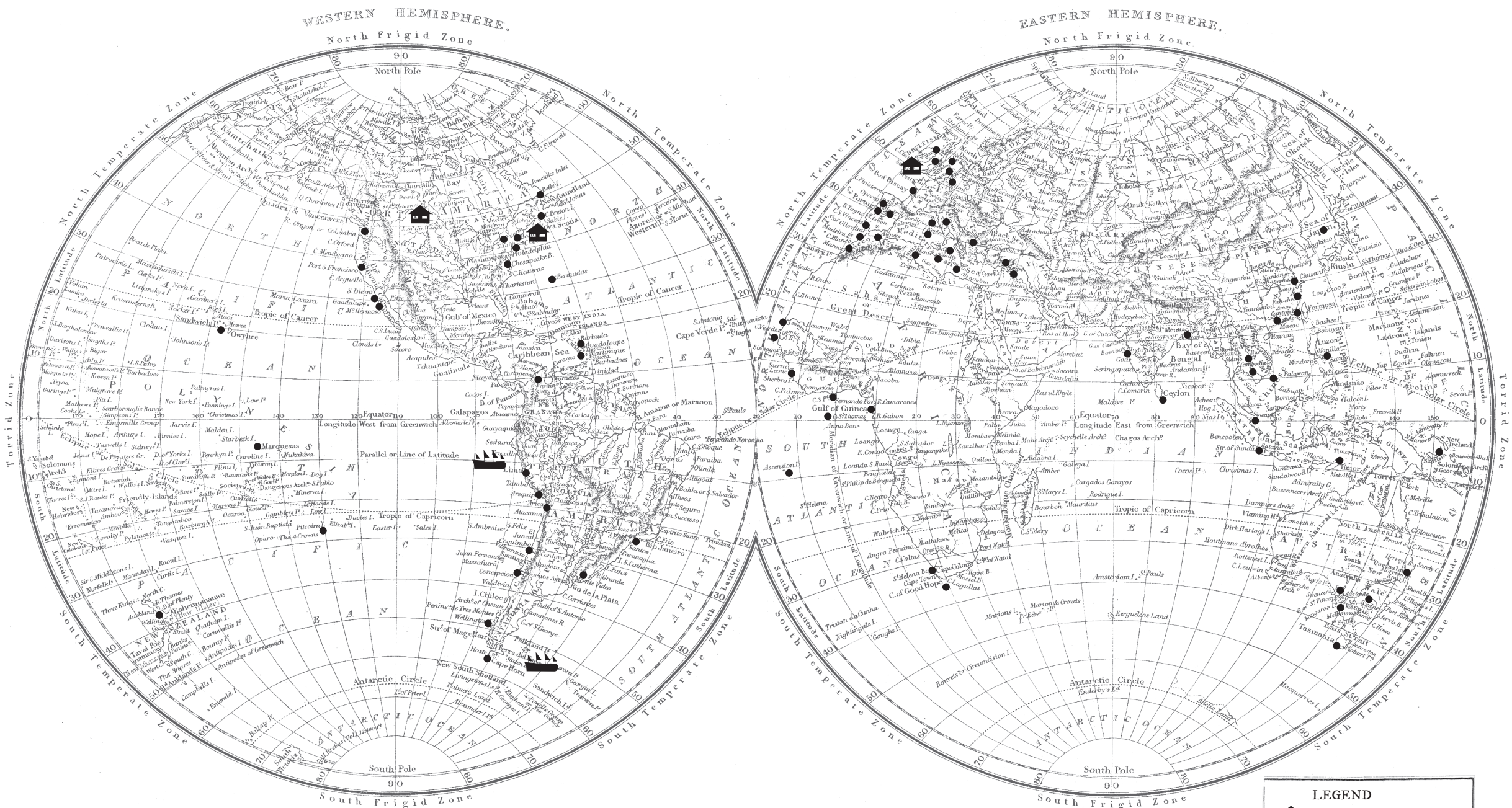


**By Sea,
By Land**




The Hewsons
Look Back

THE WORLD.

IN 1860



LEGEND

-  Waters Family Homes
-  Shipwreck Locations
-  Waters Family Ports of Call

By Sea, By Land

The Hewsons
Look Back

Cover Design: Relish New Brand Experience
Book Layout and Typography: Relish New Brand Experience
Editor: Megan Evans
Project Manager & Contributing Editor: Margaret Hewson

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www.suzannepaschall.com

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Note on Original Documents & Transcriptions

The original handwritten letters and diaries (when they exist), as well as many of their transcriptions, will be available on the web site. Transcriptions have been made exactly as written, with no corrections or changes made to grammar, spelling or punctuation, so there is an historically correct version of the originals available.

Therefore, in this book, some minor grammar and punctuation changes have been made to certain direct quotes to improve readability.

Waters Family Website: www.mywatersfamily.com

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Margaret's Dedication

To the family historians, especially Amaret Smyth and Sheila Turvey, upon whose shoulders we stood to bring this book to life. Without your work this book would not be possible.

To my children, Cole, Kate, and Callum, may you welcome the ebbs and flows that are life and come to understand that your human experience has been shared by our ancestors for as long as time. As your generation now rises to have its moment in the sun, may you see your significance through the stories of those who came before you and may you find meaning and inspiration in these stories. Thank you for being my inspiration to tell this one.

“Every family is a history in itself
and even a poem to those who know how
to search its pages.”
– Alphonse de Lamartine,
from *Memory of My Youth*

A note in the collection of family papers was found in an old manuscript book likely written by Elizabeth Butterworth's eighteen-year-old nephew, Edmund Lord Butterworth, in July 1870.

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Foreword

WHAT'S IN A NAME?
A lot, apparently. A name tells a story, sends clues about identity, and signals belonging. This book is titled *By Sea, By Land*, hinting at the setting of the stories contained within its pages. Repeating names are a theme that weave seven generations of family stories together with the surname *Waters* as the unifying thread.

Born in 1781, Thomas Waters Senior appears out of nowhere, an illegitimate child bearing a surname that would prove prophetic: Waters would spend his lifetime at sea. No amount of searching had been able to definitively determine his origin, or why he was given this surname. This child would rise to become a major in the British Royal Marines, from which comes the motto “By Sea, By Land” for which this book is named. There are no modern-day descendants bearing his surname, but the Waters legacy has been carried forward through female lines in family names such as Hewson, Cairns, Dickey, Mulligan, Cox, Evans, Kessler, Smyth, Cowan, Gosselin, Turvey, Mills, and Prashner. The modern-day western Canadian Hewson family, to which I belong, descends from two of his sons, Thomas Waters Junior and Benjamin Waters.

Although the surname Waters did not continue in the family, the names of the founding generation, Thomas and Elizabeth, have continued to the present and there are eight Thomases and six Elizabeths on the family tree. In the next generation, it was through their two sons, Thomas and Benjamin, and their wives, Amaret and Barbara, that the family story continued. All these

names that have been repeated and remain in the family today. There have been three Benjamins and three Barbaras to date. The unusual name Amaret, which is often shortened to Amy, has been repeated as a first name eight known times through the generations. When the seventh Amaret was born in 2000, her grandmother, Amaret (Hewson) Smyth, prepared an album for her granddaughter titled, “The Book of Amaret.” This album included photographs and information about each of the previous Amarets. Additionally, names were also moved forward by middle names and my uncle Thomas Hewson was given Waters as a middle name.

As this book came to life, I struggled with how to refer to myself. My first name, *Margaret*, is both my maternal aunt’s first name and my paternal grandmother’s middle name. Margaret, or Maggie, or Peggy—it’s the label for “me,” the name I answer to and who I see myself as. My middle name, *Dianne*, is for the woman who played matchmaker and introduced my parents. My last name is an additional identifier but has been less constant. I was born with the surname *Hewson*, which shows how I fit into the story of this book. It indicates my family of origin and, as a farmer working the land that first my grandfather and then my uncles and father worked (all named Hewson), it also relates to my career path.

My first married surname was *Hansen*, and that name is a link to my children. It’s a name I have used much of my adult life and it is also associated with my professional and business life. Because of the significance to my children, Hansen is a name I have retained into my second marriage, but it is a transitory name for me and though it’s the name I habitually use, it no longer represents who I am.

Rigetti is my husband Robert’s surname, and as my children become older and more independent, it is the surname I will fully adopt. Rigetti represents solidarity with my husband and is the name I plan to grow old with. With all that said, for this book, *Margaret Hewson* is the label I chose for myself.

Why A Book?

My family knows much about certain branches of its family tree, however, one of the first branches to be more than birthdates and birthplaces is that of the Waters family. The letters maintained by the family not only tell a story of historic world events and places but give insight into the personalities of long

dead ancestors and showed me that their struggles are the same as ours today. When I asked my uncle Thomas Hewson to reflect on the biggest changes of his life, he said what's more remarkable than what changes is what *doesn't* change—the human experience is enduring and universal.

I had heard the stories about generations of mariners—two Thomas Waters (a Senior and a Junior) as well as Frank Hewson. I knew the story of how my grandfather, Geoff Hewson, came to Canada as a teenager just shy of his seventeenth birthday. There were unanswered questions about my grandmother, Susan Hewson, who died unexpectedly, leaving behind a large family; my father was only seven years old.

Then, my aunt Heather Gosselin dropped off a box of binders filled with family letters, and in that box of letters I “met,” in turn, my great, great grandmother, Alice Cairns, and my great grandmother, Amy Hewson. I fell in love with both women. They felt like characters in an amazing story and I wanted to know more about them and their families. I started reading anything and everything I could find about the family. When I saw how all these stories connected through Thomas Water Sr. I wanted their stories to be preserved together in one place.

With a group of family members, I began gathering and digitizing historical family information. At the same time, I was part of a committee working with Suzanne Paschall on a history book for the Western Canadian Wheat Growers and I asked her to help bring the fascinating characters of my family to life. By the time Covid arrived in early 2020, I had compiled a sizable amount of material and was trying to make sense of it. When the Covid lockdowns started, I was positioned to make use of my newfound time at home. Suzanne and I got to work.

I started with Major Thomas Waters Sr. because that's where the family documentation begins, and I ended the story with where the Hewson family is today.

A History of Historians

A large collection of letters and diary pages, carefully preserved and handed down by family members in each generation, is the core of a rich and unusual archive that also includes images of artifacts going back more than 200 years.

In our case, we know much more than is typical due to the preservation and curation of our history by a collaborative network of family historians over time. These historians, who are mostly the women of the family, deserve particular credit for their devoted commitment to preserving and handing down the family stories. This work began with a family tree drawn in the Waters family bible and the development of a multi-generational Waters Family Scrapbook containing poetry, newspaper clippings and personal histories. We owe a debt of gratitude to May Waters, born in 1863 (daughter of Benjamin Waters and granddaughter of Thomas Waters Sr.) for her time spent transcribing letters and diaries and drawing up family trees, which provide much of our Waters history knowledge.

The interest in family history was passed down through many generations and branches of the family tree, so that by the 1960-80s, several great-great-grandchildren (and one great-great-granddaughter-in-law) of Thomas Waters Sr. were individually involved in family history projects. These included Amaret Smyth, Sheila Turvey, Amy Reynolds, Elizabeth Evans and Tom Mulligan. Of particular importance to this project were the contributions of Amaret Smyth and Sheila Turvey; without their transcriptions, research, writing and document maintenance, this project would not have been possible.

Sheila wrote multiple family histories, including the Turvey and Waters histories. She titled her Waters family work “The Waters—Seafaring Men and Stay-at-Home Families” which included typed transcriptions of two generations of Waters’ family letters and additional Waters family research. Amaret also researched and transcribed Waters history, working collaboratively with Sheila through the 1970s despite living across an ocean from one another and not having the ease and speed of Internet communication. Amaret also established and maintained family trees, transcribed the Alice Cairns letters, made copies of Alice Cairns’ diaries, copied Amy Hewson’s wartime letters, wrote histories on the Rev. Cairns and Geoff Hewson, transcribed Frank Hewson’s voyage records, pieced the story together, and maintained materials enabling the work to move into the future.

I am now making my contribution by bringing all the material together into this book and a companion website. I feel honoured and blessed to have this opportunity, and I’m so grateful to all the people who came before me for recognizing its value and then documenting and maintaining it; because of



Margaret Hewson wearing a century-old apron made by her pioneering great-great-grandmother Alice (Waters) Cairns.

them I am able to share this incredible book today. My children, their cousins, then their children and grandchildren and all who come after will be able to read the stories of their ancestors, look up more information on the website, and dig further into any subjects that interest them.

It may also be that others, unrelated to us but interested in family history or the first-person accounts of world events contained in the book, will find these pages engaging and inspiring. It is my hope that reading *By Sea, By Land* will rekindle memories in the elder generations of our family and bring alive ancestors that the younger family members never knew. I also believe that by sharing the book more broadly, historians in related disciplines will find valuable material in the diaries, letters and images of our ancestors.

Margaret Hewson

MARGARET HEWSON

DECEMBER 2022

LANGBANK, SASKATCHEWAN

Section I

By Sea

Introduction to Section I—By Sea

THE FIRST CENTURY OF THE FAMILY'S STORY centres around the sea as its primary setting, though we will also learn a great deal about life on land at the same time. We will meet three sea captains, their “shore wives” and children, and their extended families.

The story opens with the birth Thomas Waters Sr. who will become a major in the British Royal Marines, will parent a large family of children with wife Elizabeth, and live to be almost one hundred years old.

His sons, Thomas Jr. and Benjamin, will father the children that flow into the current generations of the family tree. Like his father, Thomas Jr. will also go to sea, eventually putting down roots in far off Nova Scotia with Amaret, a woman of Loyalist descent. Benjamin will remain on land in England where he and his wife Barbara will operate a grocery store.

Frank Hewson will be born in 1865. Like Thomas Waters Sr., he will also be an illegitimate child and will go to sea as a young adult. He will become a merchant ship captain and marry one of Benjamin and Barbara's daughters, thus uniting the Waters and Hewson families.

Section I of *By Sea, By Land* covers the period of 1781 to just past the turn of the twentieth century. At that time Captain Frank Hewson retires, concluding the seafaring history, and one of his sons is about to travel to Canada to work as a farmhand in the pioneer West, connecting to Thomas Jr.'s daughter and her family who are farming in Western Canada.

Our story begins with a mystery that has puzzled family historians for generations: *Who was the father of the man with the prophetic last name, Thomas Waters Sr., and where and how was he raised?*

Chapter 1

Hunting Thomas Waters

*My hardships since I will not tell:
But, now no more a parent's joy,
Ah! lady, ... I have learnt too well
What 'tis to be an orphan boy.¹*

IT WASN'T EASY LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE OF THOMAS WATERS. Numerous family members had tried; and for this book project more digging was done by the author and Margaret Hewson, the book's sponsor. What we did learn was primarily based on the substantial work of Sheila Turvey, who (in the 1960s-1970s) researched the Waters family and compiled numerous letters and documents, and recently commissioned work by Nicola Hallam, a professional genealogy researcher in England.

The following analysis was built on a compilation of research from all the available sources:

When a boy named Thomas Waters is born in Coombe, Devon, England sometime in 1781, the American Revolution is well underway. In October of that year, General Cornwallis surrenders at Yorktown, ending any hopes of

¹ From *The Orphan Boy's Tale. Poems by Mrs. Opie. Opie, Amelia*. 1800. P. 149-151. This poem, well-known at the time, was found handwritten in the Waters Family Scrapbook. P. 85. These poems were presumably favorites of Thomas Waters Sr. The collection covers a range of subjects all relevant to his life—the sailing life, war, the slave trade, God, love and death.

Britain retaining control of her rebellious American colonies.² England suffers a huge political and economic upheaval. Financially, the British government is nearly ruined after the enormous cost of trying to keep hold of the colonies. The national debt skyrockets, the government must impose new taxes, the military's reputation is in tatters, as is, temporarily, trade. Furthermore, in the colonies, many British Loyalists must move to the new "Upper Canada" British territory to escape persecution from the revolutionists of the fledgling republic.

Thomas' birth reflects the turmoil of the era in England. The details are murky, but it is generally acknowledged that he was an illegitimate child. Sheila Turvey wrote:

"Thomas Waters' origins and upbringing are obscure. He himself never allowed a place and date of birth to be recorded e.g., on census returns, when joining the Royal Marines, on ships' musters, in the final edition of his own diary. All family information on the subject was deliberately destroyed by his granddaughter, May Waters, sometime before her death. All that remain are vaguely remembered rumours of his being the illegitimate son of some titled man or other, all of which I have rigorously investigated without finding a shred of evidence. The father was said to "*have looked after the boy.*"³

Then, in reviewing baptismal records of the Somerset and Devon parishes in 2021, researcher Nicola Hallam of Family History Diggers found a record documenting that a "Thos. Waters was baptiz'd Oct 7, 1781, at Broomfield church in Thom."⁴ She found the record curious:

"What is really unusual about this baptism is that there are no parents listed at all. All other entries on the page have parents listed and if illegitimate then 'base son' is used, and mother's name appears."⁵

Nicola considered several possibilities as to these inconsistencies:

"...The vicar simply forgot to record this information—[this] seems unlikely given the information is recorded in every other entry. Perhaps the baptism was carried out and not recorded immediately and the vicar

2 *Effects of the American Revolution: Summary & History*. November 22, 2013. Found 4/22/21 at <https://study.com/academy/lesson/effects-of-the-american-revolution.html>.

3 *The Waters Family, Volume I*. Turvey, Sheila. P. 2.

4 Somerset Parish Records, 1538-1914; Reference Number: D\P\broo/2/1/1. www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 31 March 2021.

5 *Butterworth Waters Report*. April 6, 2021. Hallam, Nichola, Family History Diggers. P. 1.

A close-up photograph of a handwritten entry on a document. The text is written in cursive and reads "Tho. Waters was baptiz'd Oct. 7". The ink is dark, and the paper appears aged and slightly yellowed.

A recently discovered baptismal certificate for a “Thomas Waters,” dated October 7, 1781. Although not conclusive, this is very likely the record for “our” Thomas Waters. Found in Somerset Parish Records, 1538-1914. Butterworth-Waters Family Report. 2021.

could not recall the parents’ names. Is it significant that the baptism entry is recorded out of sequence? The previous entry is 14 October, Thomas Waters baptism was October 7th.

“...This was an adult baptism—this is possible, though would often be recorded as such and would probably still include parents’ names.

“...Thomas was a foundling, and his parentage was unknown—this is possible but most parish registers would have recorded the entry as ‘Thomas Waters, a foundling, was baptized.’

“...His parents were known but for some reason not recorded—[this is] possible but in the case of illegitimacy the mother’s name is recorded in all other entries in the register. Perhaps both parties were married but not to each other and had enough influence to keep those details out of the register. It is easy to speculate.”⁶

She ultimately concluded the following about the mysteries surrounding the baptismal record:

“If this is an infant’s baptism then it is exactly the right age to be our Thomas so I think this could be his baptism. He does not disclose his birthplace on any documents until later in his life when he gives Coombe. It is possible that he was born there and then baptized at a church that is some distance away in order to avoid gossip. This is often the case with illegitimate baptisms...

“There are no other birth, marriage or burial records for a person called Waters in the Broomfield parish registers between 1771 and 1791. This seems to indicate that the Waters family were not normally resident in the parish. A wider search shows there were Waters families living in different parishes within a 5-mile radius of Broomfield.”⁷

6 *ibid.*

7 *ibid.* P.2.

The Sillifants & a sister

Though much of Thomas' childhood had been a mystery, we did have some verifiable and valuable information about his early twenties through letters and research by Sheila Turvey. We knew he received a sum of money; we knew who managed the funds he received, and we knew he had a sister:

“All that we do know is that on coming of age he and his sister, Mary Totnes,⁸ each inherited a capital of about £1,000; that John Sillifant Esq., a landed gentleman of Coombe House, near Crediton, Devon, acted as his somewhat remote guardian; and that someone with influence must have got him his commission in the Royal Marines...in 1804.”⁹

John Sillifant (1765-1843) was the head of household of Coombe House. The Sillifants were landed gentry, meaning they were nobility; people of wealth who owned land and usually made their money from renting that land to others, or who at least owned a country estate.¹⁰ Thomas receives remittances from Sillifant well into middle age, and these are discussed at length with his wife in their correspondence, though purely as financial transactions.

Thomas' older sister, Mary Totness, was possibly born on New Year's Day in 1780 in Somerset, England. We knew Mary was baptized on January 15, 1780, at the parish church of Nether Stowey in Somerset as the daughter of Mary Totness.¹¹

But there was no evidence that Mary's mother was also Thomas Waters' mother and, given that Thomas never refers to a mother either, it seemed unlikely that Mary Totness was also his mother. Otherwise, one would presume he would have been raised by her along with his sister and that between the two of them and their correspondence in adult life, there would have been some reference to their mother and their childhoods. We found no such reference.

However, this alone wasn't conclusive evidence that they weren't raised together. We did know that they were acquainted and aware of their relationship to each other, because they carried on a regular relationship throughout their adult lifetimes, visiting and writing to each other in a familiar manner. They consistently referred to each other as “brother” and “sister.”

8 Mary's surname is spelled variously in documents as Totnes and Totness. In this book, we will use “Totness,” except when quoting a document that spells it otherwise.

9 *The Waters Family, Volume I*. Turvey, Sheila. P. 2.

10 *Landed Gentry*. Wikipedia. Accessed on 12/4/20 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Landed_gentry.

11 *The Waters Family, Volume I*. Turvey, Sheila. P. 2.

The Sillifant family maintained an interest in Mary's education, and she would even live with John Sillifant's sister in Crediton when she was thirty years old.¹²

We were lucky to have some of the letters that the adult Mary later wrote to her brother, Thomas, which gave some account of her interests and activities, so we knew that Mary did well in life, despite her inauspicious beginnings.

And that £1,000 capital that Thomas and Mary each inherited? For perspective, it would be today's wealth equivalent of about £85,000 or about \$145,000 CAD.¹³ In other words, Thomas and Mary would each have a sizable nest-egg with which to start out their young adult lives, though if asked, they might both have preferred to have a father instead of the money.

Illegitimacy in England

Illegitimacy in England was never common. At about 3 percent of births in 1750, it slowly increased to 7 percent in the 1840s, and then declined to about 4 percent in the 1890s.¹⁴

It was usual in cases of illegitimacy for the father to be served with a maintenance order from the county Justice of the Peace to pay for the child's maintenance, regardless of whether he was named on the birth record. If he was unwilling to do so, he might be imprisoned under the provisions of the Bastardy Act 1733.¹⁵

The close relationship between Thomas and the Sillifant family seemed to indicate a much more intimate relationship than only the distribution of involuntary payments.

While Thomas' relationship with John Sillifant seemed civil, he rarely ventured much beyond discussion of transactional funds management in his letters. For Sillifant's part, however, there was clear evidence that he cared about Thomas' well-being throughout his life, and not just his financial health. His letters contain numerous requests for Thomas to write more often; to keep John and his wife apprised of what was going on in his life and with his family. He often expressed his great desire for Thomas' success in all things. In fact, he and Mrs. Sillifant seem to feel quite parental about Thomas.

12 Letter. John Sillifant to Thomas Waters. Aug 24, 1810.

13 Calculated on December 29, 2021, using calculators found on MeasuringWorth.com. (<https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/ukcompare/relativevalue.php>) and X-Rates.com (<https://www.x-rates.com/historical/?from=GBP&amount=82550&date=2021-12-29>).

14 *Records of Illegitimate Children*. Camp, Anthony. Family Tree Magazine (UK), Vol. 17, no 7 (May 2001), P. 7-9. Found 9/18/20 at https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Illegitimacy_in_England.

15 *Illegitimacy in England*, Family Search. Found 10/12/20 at https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Illegitimacy_in_England.

Finally, brand-new research would explain the context of much of this information, and the puzzle pieces would move closer together. In fact, the man mostly likely to be Thomas' father would finally be revealed as a direct result of research for this book.

The mystery revealed

Up to this point in the research, the identity of Thomas' father had remained unknown for centuries—until late in the winter of 2022, when an additional search by Family History Diggers uncovered new, persuasive evidence contained in a will. The will confirmed that a William (not Thomas) Sillifant was Thomas Waters' biological father. William was the uncle of John Sillifant, upon whom he bestowed the responsibility of paying a quarterly stipend to Thomas until age twenty-one. William Sillifant died in 1795 and left his will, written on December 11, 1790; it contained three codicils added in 1792, 1793 and 1794. The key to the mystery was contained in the main body of the will:

“Also I give and bequeath unto and to the use of Thomas Waters an infant now between six and seven years of age and at present living with Margaret davey [sic] at Coleford the sum of Fourteen pounds a year clear of all Reprisals and Deductions payable by Quarterly payments by my Executor the said John Sillifant out of my Estate yearly and every year until he the said Thomas Water attains his age of Twenty one years if he so long live for the support Maintenance and Education and putting him out to some trade and when he attains the said age of Twenty one years the said annuity to cease.”¹⁶

The report concludes “The fact that William feels responsible enough for Thomas to provide for him into adulthood and to get him set up in a trade means that Thomas was almost certainly his son.”¹⁷

But the will contained more surprises—Thomas had another, heretofore unknown, half sibling:

“In the 1794 codicil there is evidence that Thomas was not William's only illegitimate child. This relates to an Elizabeth, wife of a John Somerfield.

¹⁶ *Parentage of Thomas Waters—Updated*. Hallam, Nicola. Family History Diggers. February 2, 2022. P. 1.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

before the Right Honourable Sir William Arundell
 Knight Doctor of Law Master of the Court of Chancery
 at the Prerogative Court of Canterbury lawfully
 constituted by the death of Sir Thomas Arundell
 the eldest of the deceased and the sole executor
 named in the said will to whom administration was
 granted of all and singular the Goods Chattels and
 Credits of the said deceased his Executors first
 sworn by Commission duly to administer.

William Sillifant

This is the last Will

and Testament of me William Sillifant of
 Coleridge in the Parish of Coleridge in the County
 of Devon Gentleman In the first place I do give
 my Body myne or decently buried in the Burial
 place of my Family in Coleridge Church yard
 without the Town walls thereof there lately erected by
 me for that purpose I Give and Bequeath unto
 my daughter Sillifant my love and her Assigns for
 and during the term of five natural life One
 annuity Equal to or sum of twenty pounds a
 year first of all Curre and Interest of the same

and appoint my said Daughter John Sillifant who
 and sole Executor of this my last will and Testament
 and I do hereby revoke and make void all former
 Wills by me at any time heretofore made also I
 Give and Bequeath unto and to the use of Edward
 Waters an Infant now between six and seven
 years of Age and at present living with Sir Margrett
 Jarry at Coleridge the sum of five hundred pounds a
 year less of all Disbursements and Deductions payable by
 quarterly payments by my Executor the said John
 Sillifant out of my Estate yearly and every year
 until he the said Edward Waters attains his age of
 twenty one year if he so long live for the support
 maintenance and Education and putting him out
 to some trade and when he attains the said age of
 twenty one year the said annuity to cease also I

Excerpts from the will of William Sillifant, presumed father of Thomas Waters and uncle of Thomas's benefactor John Sillifant. Found in documents in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury and available to view on Ancestry.com.

William leaves her 2 shillings a week, to be paid until 11 September 1811. The money for this is to come from £500 that he wanted invested. The main part of this £500 is bequeathed to “Samuel Andrew, a Boy christened by that name at the parish of Cheldon in the said County of Devon on the eleventh day of September one thousand seven hundred and ninety, if he shall be then living and if he die before that period I order my executor to pay Elizabeth Somerfield the two shillings a week for her life.” The date that the 2 shillings a week is due to end is when Samuel turns 21. The baptism records for Cheldon show the baptism of a boy called Samuel Andrew who is “reputed base born.” As with the baptism of Thomas Waters there are no parents mentioned.”¹⁸

18 *ibid.* P.1-2.

William Sillifant

So, who was Thomas' father? William Sillifant was baptised on February 17, 1729-30 at Colebrook. His parents were John and Mary. He married Susanna Wreford at Sandford in Devon on March 5, 1764. They had six children, Ann (who died shortly after birth, Mary, Timothy, a second Ann, John (who died at three years of age) and William. None of the children would make it past young adulthood—this is likely the reason that William's nephew John Sillifant inherits the bulk of his estate.

Before his wife Susanna died in 1792, he had three illegitimate children that we know of: Mary Totness, Thomas Waters and Samuel Andrew.¹⁹

After Susanna's death, a woman named Ann Pedlar lived with William. William died three years after his wife and was buried on May 2, 1795, at Colebrooke.

We still have no evidence that Thomas was ever told who his father was, but one random comment from an 1840 letter suggests that he may have known something of his parentage on one side, though it's not clear which side that might be:

“My Cousin writes a good letter for a poor person, and an excellent hand, one would not have expected such good writing and she seems very pious she must be a very worthy and I should suppose clever woman indeed I would say a superior woman, if she had had health and opportunity to have got forward in the world I have no doubt she would, poor woman how much she must be oppressed in her mind, what are our troubles compared to hers, where she appears to be in the midst of poverty distress and sickness and yet she seems to bear it all well up, with pious resignation in God's providence, and her poor mother, what an aged woman in the midst of affliction, I pity them but it is all I can do for them, God can provide for them I cannot, for I cannot provide for my own to my satisfaction, and I am not conscious that any crumbs fall from our table that we do not pick up and eat, but, God help us all. My Cousin's letter is worth preserving it shows her in the midst of affliction bearing up firmly with a trust in Gracious Providence...”²⁰

¹⁹ *Parentage of Thomas Waters—Updated*. Hallam, Nicola. Family History Diggers. February 2, 2022. P.3.

²⁰ Letter. Thomas Waters to Elizabeth Waters. April 17, 1840.

A mystery mother

The will reveals more information about where and by whom Thomas was raised, though it sheds little additional light on who may have been his mother. Here is the Family Diggers commentary:

“So it is clear that Elizabeth was the mother of Samuel Andrew, sadly there is no information in the will documents that give a similar clue to the mother of Thomas. He is described as living with a Margaret Davey of Coleford. I found a woman with this name from Coleford and buried at Colebrooke on 5 May 1813 aged 79 which means she was born around 1734.² This would make her too old to be his mother (although not impossible). It is worth noting that one of the witnesses of the 1790 will was a John Davey.

“Was William also the father of Mary Totness? There is no reference to her in the will. However, I think that the fact she received the same inheritance as Thomas via John Sillifant makes it extremely likely. John comes across as a very fair man and so he has perhaps used his uncle’s estate to provide her with the same financial support as Thomas.

“Was Mary Totness the mother of both Mary and Thomas? Possibly. Their baptisms are far enough apart, 5 January 1780 and 7 October 1781, for them to be full siblings. At the moment, all we can say is that they are almost certainly, half-siblings.”²¹

All evidence points to the notion that not only did Thomas possibly not ever know his father, but he may also not have known his mother, or that she died when he was young. It is frustrating that even with the new knowledge of his father, there is no revelation of the mother’s identity. It seems odd that William Sillifant identified Samuel Andrew’s mother in his will but not Thomas’ mother, and we also have no information as to why Thomas was given the surname “Waters,” though one could assume that this was the mother’s last name.

So, whether Thomas’ mother was Mary Totness, or a woman called “Waters” from a neighbouring parish or someone else entirely, is a matter for future generations to pursue. But it’s quite likely that not knowing either his mother or father, if that was the case, would have contributed significantly to Thomas’ world view, and would particularly colour his views on family.

The impact of a murky past

Given the context of the times, we can imagine that Thomas must have felt a great sense of shame over the situation of his birth as demonstrated in his complete avoidance of the subject in all correspondence—including in the most intimate letters to his wife.

Though Thomas' true heritage may never be known, what is known is that he has a long and notable life, from a young age lifting himself up far above the social expectations of an illegitimate boy of Georgian England. He works as hard as a man can work, often in dangerous conditions, and looks after his family to the best of his ability. He fathers a large brood of children, in whom he instills strong and humanitarian values (though often indirectly through letters to his wife). Several of those children would themselves have fascinating lives of their own and continue the family line.

Chapter 2

Off to Sea

*A wet sheet and a flowing sea,
A wind that follows fast,
And fills the white and rustling sail,
And bends the gallant mast,
And bends the gallant mast, my boys,
While, like the eagle free,
Away the good ship flies, and leaves
Old England on the lee.*

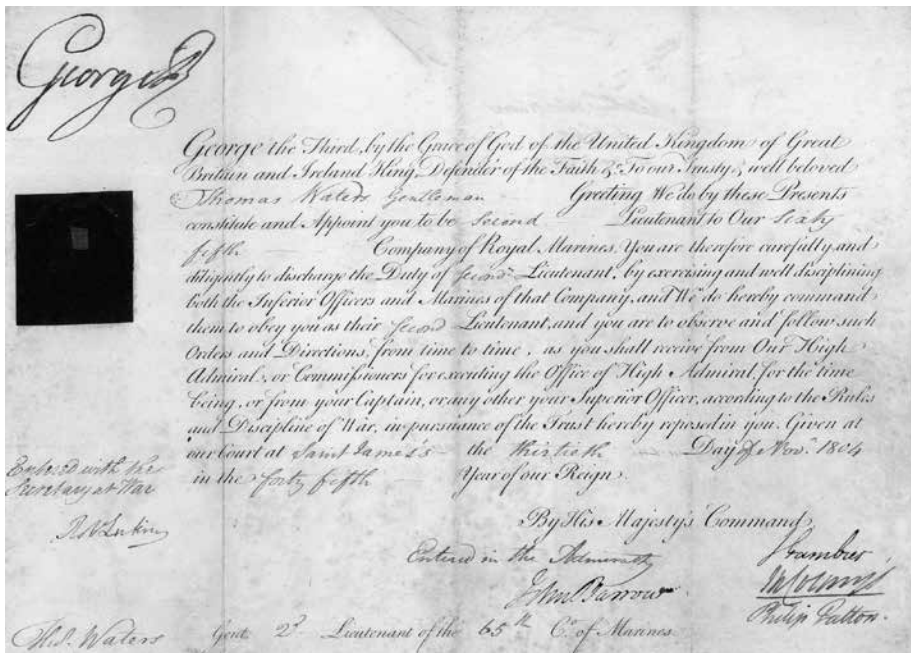
—ALLAN CUNNINGHAM, *THE SEA*²²

ON MAY 18, 1803, THE NAPOLEONIC WARS BEGIN, led by Napoleon I against a fluctuating group of allies and thrusting Europe into twelve years of major conflicts. The wars stem from the unresolved disputes associated with the French Revolution and ultimately have profound consequences on global history, including the rise of Britain as the world's foremost naval and economic power.²³

The wars create a need for thousands of men to serve in England's armed forces. Because it is a very hard life and volunteers were lacking, many are forced into service through impressment, a Royal Navy practice. While other European navies apply forced recruitment in times of war, this is generally done as an extension of the practice of formal conscription applied by most

22 Waters Family Scrapbook. Multiple authors. Found handwritten, presumably a favorite poem of Thomas Sr. First verse of "The Sea." Written by famous Scottish poet Allan Cunningham in 1804. P. 84. It was called by various titles; here the person who wrote it in the scrapbook calls it "The Sea Song."

23 *Napoleonic Wars*. Found 10/13/ at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Napoleonic_Wars.



Thomas Waters' officer's commission into the British Royal Marines, signed by King George III.

European armies from the Napoleonic Wars onward. Though the public opposes conscription in general, impressment is repeatedly upheld by the courts, as it is deemed vital to the strength of the navy and, by extension, to the survival of the British influence and realm.²⁴

Thomas obtains his commission (also called an "entitlement") in 1804 at age twenty-three and joins the Royal Marines as a second lieutenant on November 30.

King George III signs his certificate.

Whether he might have been conscripted without an officer's commission will never be known, but it seems highly likely that he would have been.

The mighty British Navy

Until the advent of air transport and the creation of the Channel Tunnel in 1994, marine transport was the only way of reaching the British Isles. For this reason, maritime trade and naval power have always had great importance in England.

²⁴ *Impressment*, Found 11/4/20 at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Impressment>.

The British Navy in the nineteenth century is at its mightiest pinnacle during Thomas' lifetime. It is the end of the great Age of Sail (1571–1862), a period in which international trade and naval warfare are dominated by sailing ships and gunpowder warfare.²⁵

The latter part of this period, between the mid-eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century, is called the Golden Age of Sail, when sailing vessels reach their peak size and complexity, and just before steamboats started to take trade away from sail.

It is a time of great mariner innovation as well. When Thomas Waters is born in 1781, two significant devices that would revolutionize sailing had only recently been invented. Between the 1720s and 1750s, John Campbell had invented the sextant, an improved navigational device enabling sailors to measure latitude, and John Harrison develops reliable chronometers (seafaring clocks) that allow sailors to measure longitude accurately for the first time. Thomas' era is among the earliest group of mariners to have used such innovative tools.

The Royal Marines

The Royal Marines, an amphibious light infantry that became one of the five fighting arms of the Royal Navy, had only just been named in 1802 by King George III. Three divisions were developed immediately, and a fourth, headquartered in Woolwich, was formed in 1805. This appears to have been the division to which Thomas is first assigned.

Throughout its history, the Royal Marines, often fighting beside the British Army, saw action in several major wars, including the Napoleonic Wars.

During the Napoleonic Wars, the Royal Marines participate in every notable naval battle on board the Royal Navy's ships and also take part in multiple amphibious actions. Marines have a dual function aboard ships of the Royal Navy during this period. They routinely ensure the security of the ship's officers and support their maintenance of discipline in the ship's crew. In battle, they engage the enemy's crews, whether firing from positions on their own ship or fighting in boarding actions.²⁶

25 *Age of Sail*. Found 11/15/20 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Age_of_Sail.

26 *The Royal Marines*. Found 9/30/20 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Marines.

Fitting out for the Marines

When Thomas prepares for his first job at sea, it is John's wife, Mary Anne Prideaux Sillifant (b. 1775, d. 1823), who purchases and sends to him all the gear he needs. Fitting out a young Marine for his assignment is a fair bit of work, and generally handled by the mother or wife of a recruit. It's interesting to note how motherly the twenty-nine-year-old Mary Anne seems in writing to her husband's charge Thomas who, at twenty-three, is a mere six years younger than she:

"I have sent the things as you desired the list of which you will find enclosed. The number is not so large as you mentioned as Mr. Sillifant inquired of those who are well acquainted with fitting out young men & I sent the things accordingly. I have not sent any night shirts as I thought the three days which you have would answer that purpose extremely well. I have therefore left three shirts without frills, as the frills on your day shirts are as good as new, & I wish you to have them taken off of the 3 shirts you are going to make night shirts & sewn on the 3 calico shirts without frills. You will find 9 nightcaps the 3 new ones you already have, which makes the dozen. The pocket handkerchiefs I hope you will like. They are not so expensive as silk, 4p apiece, & no one can know them from silk.

"I have managed as well as I can respecting your things & if you want any other necessaries that you mind, I can procure on better terms than yourself. If you will let me know I will most readily do it for you...I hope you will be careful in your expenditure as with the strictest economy you will find it very expensive & hundreds of young men who enter the Service have not more than fifty pounds in the world to expend. Mr. Sewell cost his father £35."

She then adds some "PS" advice for the young military recruit:

"I have sent your bills which you paid in Exeter, as it is necessary they should be kept. Play cards as little as you can help, as whist²⁷ is very expensive...It is so much so I never meet with any in this neighbourhood who play so high."

She signs the letter "I remain your Sincere Friend, M.A. Sillifant."²⁸

27 Whist is a classic English trick-taking card game which was widely played in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It became the premier intellectual card game of the Western world, superseded only by bridge in about 1900. For more: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whist>.

28 Letter. Mary Anne Sillifant to Thomas Waters, Sr. Undated.

Portsmouth

At the beginning of his career, Thomas is stationed at Royal Marines headquarters in Portsmouth. The Portsmouth naval base is the oldest in the Royal Navy, and it has been an important part of the defense of the British Isles for centuries. At one time it was the largest industrial site in the world and is home to one of the oldest drydocks in the world.

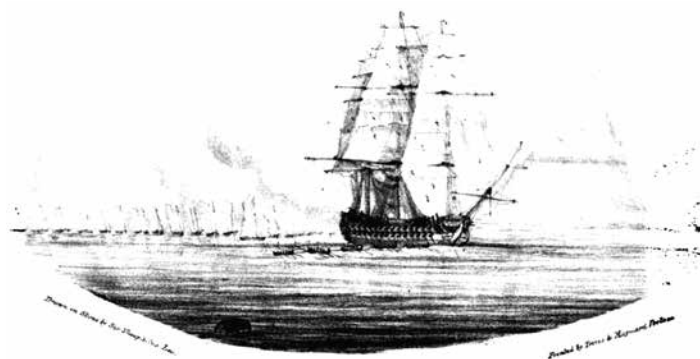
On December 2, 1804, Thomas is stationed at Royal Marines headquarters in Portsmouth, and he leaves on his first voyage as a young second lieutenant with a detachment on board *HMS Regulus* on May 3, 1805. Once in the North Sea, they are stationed off the coast of Boulogne, France at Guernsey Station. Guernsey Island is the second largest of the Channel Islands off the coast of France and was a critical strategic outpost for the British Navy, especially during the Napoleonic Wars.

Thomas' first assignment on *Regulus* is likely to participate in protecting England's interests at sea as part of the Napoleonic Wars. *Regulus* was a forty-four-gun fifth-rate Roebuck class two-decker, converted to a troopship in 1789.

On July 10, 1807, Thomas returns to Portsmouth headquarters after a twenty-six-month voyage on *Regulus*, where he is presumably engaged in war efforts. He remains there for four months and then is given his next assignment.



The lower end of Portsmouth harbour at the end of the 19th century as seen from Gosport. Detroit Publishing. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.



Thomas Waters' second voyage was on *HMS Swiftsure*, which had fought in the Battle of Trafalgar. This image is of *Swiftsure* becalmed near Algeciras, as sketched by one of her midshipmen, John Theophilus Lee, in 1798. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

HMS Swiftsure

On November 5, 1807, Thomas sails on *HMS Swiftsure* to the North American Station, a British command just off the coast of Bermuda. While still at the North American Station on *Swiftsure*, on July 27, 1808, Thomas is made a lieutenant.

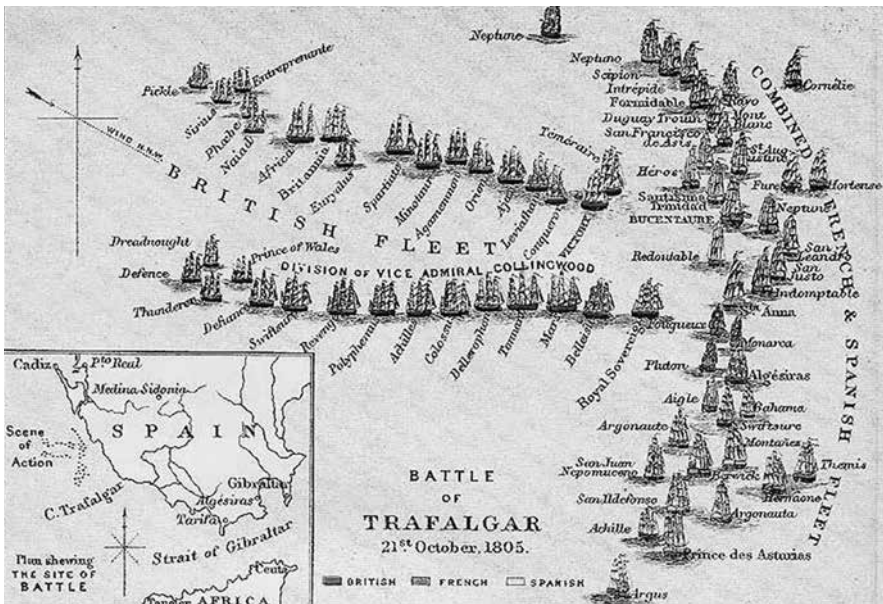
It appears *Swiftsure* was something of a famous ship, a seventy-four-gun third-rate ship of the line,²⁹ which had fought at the legendary Battle of Trafalgar on October 21, 1805.

Swiftsure's captain John Conn is a close friend of the famous Admiral Nelson and is himself on track to become an admiral when on May 4, 1810, it is reported that he accidentally falls overboard or jumps while chasing a small French vessel. Thomas' former messmates, who are still serving on *Swiftsure* and who know the captain best, may tell the most accurate story:

“...The circumstances attending it are truly distressing. He either fell or jumped out of the stern windows (the latter is to be feared) while the Ship was going seven or eight Knots, and before the Boat could reach him (though they were soon out) he disappeared. You may well imagine the sensation this sad Accident has caused. We all liked and respected him and were greatly annoyed at finding his mind so disordered, as of late it frequently appeared to be.”³⁰

29 A ship of the line was a type of naval warship constructed from the seventeenth century to the mid-nineteenth century designed for the naval tactic known as the line of battle, which depended on the two columns of opposing warships maneuvering to fire with the cannons along their broadsides. For more: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ship_of_the_line.

30 Letter. George P. Wingrove to Thomas Waters. May 8, 1810.



This map shows the battleship configuration for the infamous Battle of Trafalgar, including the *HMS Swiftsure*, which Thomas served on two years after the battle, in 1807. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

It's possible that Conn is the captain for the last part of Thomas' stint on *Swiftsure* as he became commodore³¹ on *Swiftsure* sometime in 1810; however, it would be a very short time if at all, since Thomas leaves the ship on January 18, 1810, to accept the promotion to Commander of Forces on Ireland Island, Bermuda, a position he would hold for just under a year, until January 16, 1811.

Ireland Island

The Royal Navy had moved in on Ireland Island on June 12, 1809, after England had acquired it. Bermuda itself was the only remaining British Territory. Because there had been an earlier fear of leprosy, all the native inhabitants on the island had left their jungle of cedar and swine and wooden houses thatched with

31 'Commodore' has only been a substantive rank in the Royal Navy since 1997. Until then the term denoted a functional position rather than a formal rank, being the title bestowed on the senior officer of a fleet of at least two naval vessels comprising an independent (usually ad hoc and short-term) command. (In this case, for instance, a lieutenant in substantive rank could be a commodore for the term of the command.) From [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commodore_\(Royal_Navy\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commodore_(Royal_Navy)). Thomas was also referred to as "Commandant" by some of his messmates in letters to him, but the formal title was 'Commodore' or 'Commander.'

palmetto.³² Until it became a major Royal Navy base there were no roads and only a few inhabitants.

Having retained the Canadian Maritimes to the north and some of the Caribbean islands to the south, Bermuda, halfway between, was both the logical and only sound geographical position for the creation of a new naval base. Its purpose was to serve as a replacement for all the ports on the eastern seaboard of the new United States that had been, until 1783, British possessions.³³

We know a little of Thomas' life in Bermuda, primarily from seven letters written to him by his former messmates on *Swiftsure*. We learn through them that he reads a lot and is learning to swim, and life seems low-key. He likely lives in the Admiralty House, shown below, the residence for the Commander of the island, and probably spends most of his time supervising the building of the new British Navy Dockyard, a project that takes years.

Today it might seem that this would be a huge promotion for a twenty-nine-year-old. However, boys often started working aboard ships before they had even reached their teens. Thomas already had seven years of experience in the Marines. He must have been a hard worker and shown good leadership skills—Admiral Sir John Borlase Warren, who would also become a baron and who was appointed Commander-in-Chief of Bermuda in 1812, thought



The Admiralty House at Bermuda Island where Thomas likely lived during his tenure there. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

32 *Bermuda's History from 1800-99*. Found 8/23/20 at <http://www.bermuda-online.org/history1800-1899.htm>.

33 *ibid.*

very highly of him. This is evidenced in correspondence from John Sillifant to Thomas, responding to a previous letter from Thomas, where Thomas must have mentioned something about “kind attentions” from a “Sir B. Warren.” Sillifant writes: “Those kind attentions you receive from Sir B. Warren I have no doubt are in consequence of your propriety of conduct & attention to duty & which is very gratifying to us.”³⁴

His leadership in this role is praised. Messmate John Gullett writes:

“I was...gratified to hear the wisdom of your Excellency’s government extolled (both civil & military) by high and low, rich & poor. In short, it’s said justice was never administered in greater mercy...”³⁵

Through the August 24 letter from John Sillifant, we indirectly learn a few professional and personal items about Thomas. We learn he enjoys gardening (a passion his son will inherit): “Mrs. Sillifant has also sent some Flower Seeds etc. for your Garden...”³⁶ We also discover that Thomas is awaiting a promotion, and Sillifant assures him it will be coming soon: “...You will soon have a company. I observe there are near 120 first Lieutenants below you.”³⁷

John is up to date on the latest news from the Napoleonic Wars, which rage on: “There is at present no prospect of peace. I am just informed that a cartel for exchange of prisoners is at last agreed to by Buonaparte...”³⁸

Mary Totness: A woman of culture and enterprise

While Thomas has his adventures at sea, his sister Mary Totness has her own on land. Mary often defers to her brother, in several letters saying her life is nothing to his, and that she has little of interest to report. However, we can see, in fact, she does.

Mary is an independent, entrepreneurial woman who is very interested in society and culture. She never marries or even mentions a male companion her entire life. The Sillifants looked after her education, and in 1810, at age thirty, she lives for some time with one of John Sillifant’s sisters in Crediton.

34 Letter. John Sillifant to Thomas Waters. August 24, 1810.

35 Letter. John Gullett to Thomas Waters. April 8, 1810.

36 Letter. John Sillifant to Thomas Waters. August 24, 1810.

37 *ibid.*

38 *ibid.* This prisoner exchange falls through later, and French prisoners are held by the British until 1816 as a result.

In 1812, she travels to Bath where she stays for a while, taking in cultural events featuring some of the biggest stars of the time. She reads new literature, which she recommends to Thomas, and is interested in seeing the Russian prince who is apparently visiting there.

In 1815 Mary moves to Bristol and a year later her friend, Miss Lockyear, dies and leaves Mary a legacy of £1,000 in stock. Mary uses it to purchase a home up the hill from downtown Clifton. It includes two drawing rooms and two parlours, which she rents to a single lady. She also keeps two servants. In 1818, Mary opens a milliner's shop in downtown Bristol at 29 College Green.

Not just a mariner

In addition to being a seaman, we know that Thomas is also a well-rounded person with many interests in addition to gardening. We gather from two indicators that he enjoys reading. His letter from a former messmate on *Swiftsure* asks him what books he is reading while he is in Bermuda, and Sheila Turvey references “a tiny and curious poetry book” of major English poets of the day among his papers.

This 4 1/3" x 2 3/4" book has inscriptions in Thomas' hand of lines of poetry and notes about them on the flyleaf. It is titled *The Laurel: A Selection of Poetry from the works of Sir Walter Scott, Mrs. Hemans, Montgomery, The Ettrick Shepherd, Wordsworth, Mrs. Barbauld, Lord Byron, and other eminent writers.*³⁹

The passages he chooses may provide a window into what moves him emotionally:

*It was a lovely thought to mark the hours
As they floated in light away
By the opening and folding of the flowers
That laughed to the summer day.
Thus had each moment its own rich hue...*⁴⁰

and

“She never smiled again”
(This is a song written by Mrs. Hemans.)

39 *The Waters Family, Volume I.* Turvey, Sheila. P.4.

40 From *The Dial of Flowers* written in 1827 and published in 1828 by Felicia Hemans in *Poems of Felicia Hemans in The Amulet* (1828.)

and

Ah there are memories that will not vanish

*Thoughts of the past we have no power to banish.*⁴¹

These poignant lines may speak to Thomas as he spends endless days at sea, many of which are relatively lacking in activity; especially when there is no wind and a ship is made to sit at anchor until the winds arise again to fill the sails. Perhaps the final two lines relate to his memories of his family at home, or to the loss of a child. Perhaps the “thoughts of the past” he has no power to banish include wondering who his father was or knowing who he was and knowing that his father would not claim him.

We also know that later, at least throughout the 1820s, Thomas and his wife will share poetry and use poetic language to refer to each other. During this time when Thomas is nearly always at sea, he and his wife seemed to be a loving couple who miss each other very much. Thomas’ language to her is full of affectionate names and flowery descriptions of her and the children, such as “My Charming Love” and “My Dearest Love.” He responds to poetry she has sent to him: “My Heart cannot tell you how dear you are to me. I must refer you, my sweetest Angel, to the two verses you sent me for my feelings, My Love.”

Today we might find it a little odd that a stern, seafaring man like Thomas would be fond of poetry, however poetry was the most popular genre of the Victorian period. People memorized and recited lines of poetry the way we memorize lyrics of our favorite songs.⁴² Perhaps poetry was the nineteenth century version of sending a Hallmark card.

41 From Letitia Elizabeth Landon’s poem, *Ethel Churchill*, also published as *The Two Brides* (1837).

42 For more on poetry and theatre in Victorian England, see mywatersfamily.com.

Chapter 3

Love & Marriage

THIRTY-YEAR-OLD THOMAS RETURNS to the new Marines headquarters in Woolwich on April 11, 1811 and becomes a recruiter of new servicemen. In August of 1812, he is sent to Rochdale and Macclesfield in Lancashire on a recruiting mission. It's likely that during this time he meets and falls in love with the much-younger Elizabeth Butterworth, who is only fourteen years old and lives in Rochdale. Perhaps she is home for the summer from Mrs. Knight's Boarding School near Staley Bridge, where her brother Edmund had written to her on May 16 of that year.

In any case, the young teenager (who could almost have been his daughter) must captivate Thomas, because two years later, on September 14, 1814, he and Elizabeth are married at Rochdale. The groom is thirty-three and the bride is sixteen.

Today this marriage would have been illegal in most of North America, however, in Regency England (as this period was known), marriages involving minors were valid, provided the minor's parents consented, and the parties had reached the common law age of consent for marriage, which was just fourteen for boys and twelve for girls.⁴³ Since they didn't elope and were married in her parent's parish, it appears parental consent is given for her marriage to Thomas.

43 *The Marriage Law of Jane Austen's World*. Bailey, Martha. Found 12/1/20 at <http://jasna.org/publications/persuasions-online/vol36no1/bailey/>.

Six months after the wedding, John Sillifant writes in a fashion that almost seems jocular or witty, perhaps indicating a warmer relationship with Thomas:

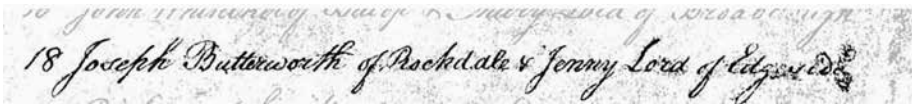
“...However, you may now have accomplished what you told me you looked forward to do, viz. won the affections of a Rich Wool Merchants Daughter: which is certainly much more pleasant & desirable than a voyage to Bermuda...”⁴⁴

Rochdale was at that time becoming one of the world’s most productive cotton spinning towns. It rose to prominence during the nineteenth century as a major mill town and centre for textile manufacture during the Industrial Revolution. It was a boomtown of the Industrial Revolution, and among the first ever industrialized towns. By the end of the nineteenth century there were woolen mills, silk manufacturers, bleachers and dyers, but cotton-spinning and weaving were the dominant industries.⁴⁵

Elizabeth Butterworth

Elizabeth had been born on March 8, 1798, in Rochdale, England. Sheila Turvey describes her parents:

“Her father, Joseph Butterworth, rather eccentrically had a wool mill in a town renowned for cotton-milling—Rochdale in Lancashire. Elizabeth’s mother, Jenny [Jane]⁴⁶ Lord, came from an old sheep-farming family in the Pennines, who lived at a farm called Rough Lee in Newchurch-in-Rossendale, Lancashire. Joseph and Jenny had met through a wool-factor, who bought from the farmers wool which he sold to the mills.”⁴⁷



A county registry entry showing Elizabeth Butterworth’s parents, Joseph and Jenny. From the Butterworth-Waters Family Report. 2021.

44 Letter. From John Sillifant to Thomas Waters. March 17, 1815.

45 *Rochdale*. Found 11/15/20 at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rochdale#:~:text=Rochdale>

46 Both 'Jenny' and 'Jane' are cited in official documents.

47 *The Waters Family*, Volume 1. Turvey, Sheila. P. 13-14.

Elizabeth grows up in a large and prosperous family. She is the second-born of eight brothers and sisters—Edmund (b. 1796); Elizabeth (b. 1798); Benjamin (b. 1800); Alice (b. 1802); Nancy (b. 1803); Joseph (b. 1805); Jane (b. 1807) and Prudence (b. 1809).⁴⁸ Despite the family's wealth, they, like millions of others, are plagued by disease and death.

Elizabeth loses her baby sister Prudence in 1809, and then in 1811, when Elizabeth is only thirteen, the family suffers the loss of both their young mother Jane, only thirty-two, and eight-year-old sister Nancy. In 1812, Joseph Butterworth's aunt, Ann Standring, loses her last child.⁴⁹ She comes to live with the Butterworths and supervises the raising of the six children, all under the age of fifteen.

Although we don't know very much about Elizabeth's childhood, we believe she had close relationships with many of her siblings and her father, who often write letters to her after she leaves home to be married. She seems particularly close to brother Edmund, who at age twenty, also dies on June 17, 1816. Nearly a year later, on June 10, 1817, her nine-year-old sister Jane also perishes.

We can imagine that Elizabeth's young adult life is hard. It must have been difficult to be a teenaged bride to a man in his thirties (more than twice her age!), and even more difficult to become a mother to their first child, Jane, who is born on December 18, 1815, sixteen months after their wedding. Elizabeth is only seventeen—hardly more than a child herself.

Only a few weeks later, on January 1, 1816, Thomas is called back to service and the couple moves to Portsmouth. Thomas and Elizabeth first live at No. 8 Cecil Place, Portsmouth.

Over the next four years, they move several more times, all within a few blocks, and all within a couple of miles of where Thomas presumably reports for duty—the Portsmouth Headquarters Naval Base.

Baby Jane

For some reason, they do not take their first-born, Jane, with them. Given that she is left in Rochdale in the care of Elizabeth's family, and the brief time between when the baby is born and they have to move, it's possible they intended it to only be temporary while they found a place to live and got set up.

48 *Butterworth-Waters Report*. Family History Diggers. Hallam, Nicola. P. 6. April 6, 2021.

49 Letter. Edmund Butterworth to Elizabeth Waters. May 16, 1812.

The family subsequently hires a wet nurse to ensure the baby has breastmilk. Perhaps Elizabeth was not able to produce milk, had difficulties breast-feeding, or she assumed it was best for the baby. Or it was necessary due to their move.

Wet nurses were entirely common and often preferred up to the turn of the twentieth century, especially among the gentry, among whom breastfeeding was not considered practical. However, in the early 1800s, it became more fashionable for women to breastfeed their own children. This resulted in improved survival rates for babies. It also became a conscious choice for mothers who wanted to delay their fertility and thus have more time between pregnancies.⁵⁰ In an age where there was no birth control, this was the only reliable way (other than abstinence) they could more fully rest and recover between pregnancies. Elizabeth would breastfeed all her children after Jane.

It seems Elizabeth's entire family has become enamored with the baby girl, including Aunt Ann, who would add the care of Elizabeth's baby Jane to her responsibilities for the Butterworth children. When Elizabeth's sister, also named Jane, dies, her father Joseph tells Elizabeth that Aunt Ann's fondness for Jane was "that of a Mother."⁵¹ It is easy to imagine that Aunt Ann also viewed baby Jane as being under her guidance, even though Jane was under the direct care (and living with) a wet nurse.

Elizabeth's sister Alice writes on several occasions to her, reporting on Jane and sharing other family news. We learn from Elizabeth's father in an April 9, 1816, letter that Jane is "at present getting her teeth, which makes her crosser than usual..." and "I propose getting it inoculated as soon as Dr. Dunlop thinks proper." (Joseph often refers to his infant granddaughter as "it.")

Baby Jane gets her inoculation at about five months of age when sister Alice writes to Elizabeth:

"...little Jane is very well she has been Inoculated and was very well all the time. You would be quite delighted if you was [sic] to see her. She does look so pretty. The Hat which you sent her is a great deal too large, but we have got her one made, a very nice one..."⁵²

We presume Jane's inoculation is for smallpox. Smallpox had been the single most lethal disease in eighteenth-century Britain but declines significantly in

50 *Infant-feeding practices and infant survival by familial wealth in London, 1752-1812*. Davenport, R.J. in *The Family History*. Found 11/30/20 at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6474727/>.

51 Letter. Joseph Butterworth to Elizabeth Waters. July 16, 1817.

52 Letter. Alice Butterworth to sister Elizabeth Waters. May 14, 1816.

adults by the turn of the nineteenth century. However, in the earlier part of the century when baby Jane is born, vaccination of infants and children is crucial to their protection, especially in urban areas.⁵³

In June, Elizabeth's father tries to assure her that Jane is receiving the best of care:

“Your Daughter Jane is very well & is quite a Pet among all of us. She is so much improved that I am sure you would neither of you know her. You seem to think her a prodigy, by wanting to know if she can walk & talk. She can do neither yet, but there is no doubt she will ere long... My Aunt is an excellent Nurse for Jane & very fond of her. She wishes me to say it must want for nothing that lays in her power to provide...”⁵⁴

Four months later, Alice has more news about Jane:

“Your little Jane gets on very well she has not got her teeth yet. She can talk a little, but not much. We are all very fond of her, my Aunt in particular, if the least thing is to do, she is never easy. The Nurse brings her up every day. She knows us all perfectly well. She is very pretty indeed. The eyes are quite black, and she is as fair as Wax. I am sure you must want to see her. She has a very good Nurse who keeps her very nice and clean she has everything, I dare say the same as if you yourself was here, for I do assure you that neither my Father nor my Aunt thinks anything is good enough for her...”⁵⁵

We can imagine life being lonely for Elizabeth, especially with her husband back at work and living in a new and strange place (the couple has already moved again, now to No. 3 Hambrook Row). And, she is already pregnant again, with a second daughter, Mary, who will be born the next February. Her father reprimands her for already being pregnant again, though surely, he is just concerned for her health. He also lectures her on breast-feeding in a nineteenth century version of mansplaining:

“I did not expect so early an increase of grand Children. You should have been another year without. I hope you will use your Endeavour to suckle

53 *The Decline of Smallpox in 18th Century London*. US National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health. Found 9/13/20 at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4373148/>.

54 Letter. Joseph Butterworth to daughter Elizabeth Waters. June 17, 1816.

55 Letter. Alice Butterworth to Elizabeth Waters. October 10, 1816.

the next. It will with Perseverance be possible. Do not give way till you find your health in Danger...”⁵⁶

Over the past year, baby Jane has been ill, according to Elizabeth’s sister Alice, who writes:

“You want to know all about your little Daughter. She is not very well at present. My Aunt thinks she has got the Whooping Cough. She has got two teeth. She is not weaned yet, but Nurse intends to wean her as soon as she gets a little better, as she has such bad nights at present...”⁵⁷

A letter two months later, though, relieves Elizabeth, saying that “baby Jane is well again.” But it’s likely that Jane’s health issues make her mother even more anxious to have her baby back. She asks her father this directly in a letter on June 5, 1817, but he responds on July 16 to say:

“Your daughter Jane is now living with us, & a fine little girl she is. She left the Nurse about a fortnight ago. She in some measure replaces our late Loss [daughter Jane who had recently died at age 9] & gains upon the affections of all of us. She is a very playsome & can walk alone, but cannot talk much yet, but she can make us well understand what she wants...

“In your Letter you wish her sent to you. I think she is too young & too good to be spared yet. When I want to send her, I will let you know. Till then you may rest content that she will have every Care that it is possible to bestow...”⁵⁸

Her father seems to be saying that they want to keep Jane because she makes them feel better and somehow compensates a bit for the loss of his own daughter Jane the month before, for whom they were obviously grieving, and perhaps also the loss of Elizabeth’s elder brother, twenty-year-old Edmund, to consumption the year prior. Somehow their comfort is more important to them than Elizabeth wanting her child back, and/or the baby being with her mother.

In the same letter, her father seems also not to approve of their lodgings in Portsmouth, and indicates he will send her china and other goods “when you

56 Letter. Joseph Butterworth to Elizabeth Waters. December 13, 1816.

57 Letter. Alice Butterworth to Elizabeth Waters. February 10, 1817.

58 Letter. Joseph Butterworth to Elizabeth Waters. July 16, 1817.

get fixed in furnished Lodgings, or in the Country...” He’ll send the goods, but not the child.

Tragically, two-year-old Jane dies two and a half months after this exchange on October 2, 1817 and is buried by the family in Balm Chapel Yard in Rochdale next to Elizabeth’s recently departed sister Jane, without her mother ever seeing her again. How painful it must have been for Elizabeth and Thomas to suffer this loss of her first child from whom they had been separated, and in addition not to have had the closure of burying her!

It’s possible that Jane dies of consumption, but the description in the second of two sad letters below, that of Jane’s swollen cheek before she became ill and died, might indicate a mouth or gum infection related to teething, such as a herpetic infection, which was (and remains) common. The difference today is that we have antibiotics, whereas in the 1800s they did not, so an infection that is today easily curable could have been fatal to a baby like Jane.

The news of their first child’s death came to the couple from Elizabeth’s father:

“Dear Daughter,

“I am very sorry to inform you & Mr. Waters of the Death of your Daughter Jane. She died yesterday Morning about 6 o’Clock. She was only poorly 7 Days, but not considered dangerously so till the Day preceding her Death.

“I intend burying her on Sunday morning beside my Daughter Jane. She was the most engaging little Child that ever was & was improving seemingly daily before her Sickness. I had her Portrait took about 3 weeks ago, intending it for you, which I will send you the first opportunity...”⁵⁹

Clearly Elizabeth isn’t satisfied with this vague description of her baby’s sudden death, who had only a few months earlier been reported as thriving. On October 13, she writes to her father asking for more information. Two months later, on December 22, Elizabeth’s father responds:

“You wish to know of what complaint your Jane died. It begun with a large swelling on the side of its Face, occasioned by getting its Teeth. I have got her Name & etc. engraved on her Stone some time ago agreeable to your request. I have sent you her Portrait enclosed in a pair of Blankets, which will save it from Damage. Also, what Clothes of hers that are worth

59 Letter. Joseph Butterworth to Elizabeth Waters & Thomas Waters Sr. October 3, 1817.

sending. They may suit Mary, whom I am glad to hear is such a fine & good Child. I know of no particular News worth mentioning, only that the Typhus Fever is very prevalent in this Neighbourhood, tho' not in many Cases fatal..."⁶⁰

This last mention also appears unconnected to baby Jane's death, as her symptoms are distinct from those of typhus. She also isn't described with any symptoms of other prevailing epidemics, such as smallpox and consumption. Whooping cough was virulent in young children and led to often fatal pneumonia and bronchitis until controlled by vaccination in the twentieth century,⁶¹ however, the aunt's earlier concerns about whooping cough don't appear to relate to Jane's final illness either, as they don't mention any cough.

Infant and youth mortality in 1800s England was high and it was common for families to lose more than one child to any number of infectious diseases of the time, because there were no vaccines or antibiotics, and therefore no way to guard against getting a fatal infection. More than 50 percent of all deaths in England and Wales in the mid-nineteenth century were due to infections, with infants and children at greatest risk.⁶² This high rate of mortality occurs among Elizabeth's siblings, as well as with her and Thomas' children. Elizabeth bears ten children over a period of twenty-five years. She delivers her first child at age seventeen; her last at age forty-two. (This is an average of a child every two and a half years over a quarter century!)

In this regard, Thomas and Elizabeth might have been considered lucky—they would only lose one infant out of their ten children.

The White Plague pandemic

Elizabeth is well acquainted with death by the time her first child perishes. She has already lost her mother, three sisters and a brother, and later will lose another sister—all presumably to the prevailing pandemic sweeping across North America and Europe throughout the 1800s—tuberculosis.

Though there are several prevalent and uncontrolled diseases such as whooping cough and smallpox at the time, tuberculosis is the most widespread and deadly.

60 Letter. Joseph Butterworth to Elizabeth Waters. December 22, 1817.

61 *England Epidemics and Major Causes of Death*. Family Search.org. Found 8/23/20 at [https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/England_Epidemics_and_Major_Causes_of_Death_5_to_W_\(National_Institute\)](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/England_Epidemics_and_Major_Causes_of_Death_5_to_W_(National_Institute)).

62 *Lesson 2.2: Infant deaths in nineteenth century England*. From *Infection & Immunity*, a course at the Open University. Found 9/17/20 at <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=28151§ion=2.2>.

TB (as it came to be known much later) is caused by airborne bacteria that attack the body's organs, most notably the lungs, and spread by coughing and sneezing. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, tuberculosis had killed one in seven of all people that had ever lived. Victims suffered from hacking, bloody coughs, intense pain in the lungs, fever, night sweats, weight loss and fatigue.⁶³ At that time, though death records weren't yet being kept in England, many of those infected died, and for those who did, it was a slow death sometimes taking up to three years. Of infected survivors, most lived with lifelong debilitating weakness and susceptibility to other diseases and illnesses.

TB has surfaced many times in the world, some say going back as far as three million years. In the "white plague" of the 1800s (so named for the paleness of the sufferer), TB was also called *consumption*, because of the weight loss associated with it, and it was known as "the Captain of all these men of death."⁶⁴

In large cities the poor had high rates of tuberculosis, but TB reached also into the homes of the most famous and wealthy. People ignored public-health campaigns to limit the spread of contagious diseases, such as the prohibition of spitting on the streets, the strict guidelines to care for infants and young children, and quarantines that separated families from ill loved ones.⁶⁵

In Elizabeth and Thomas' time, death was more common, but undoubtedly no less painful. It was to surround them their entire lives, perhaps one reason that Thomas would prove to be so focused his and his family's health.

Grief & family

It seems that Elizabeth's grief puts a wall between her and her family for several years. She has sent a package of Christmas presents to Rochdale, but they don't arrive until February 13, 1818, according to a letter from her sister Alice. There must have been a letter included, because Alice says in a March 1 thank-you letter, "We are sorry to hear that Mary is not well." But apparently there is then a long period of time where Elizabeth doesn't respond to letters from her sister. The next correspondence we have is a heart-felt letter from Alice nearly a year and a half later, here in its entirety:

63 *TB in America: 1895-1954*. Public Broadcasting System (PBS). Found 11/27/20 at <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/plague-gallery/>.

64 *Tuberculosis*. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Found 11/13/20 at <https://www.cdc.gov/tb/worldtbd/history.htm#:~:text=On%20March%2024%2C%201882%2C%20Dr,the%20United%20States%20and%20Europe.>

65 *History of Tuberculosis*. Wikipedia. Found 10/6/20 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_tuberculosis.

“My Dear Sister

I have often attempted to write to you, but I scarcely knew how to begin; however, I will write the dictates of my own heart and in so doing I hope I shall not give offence. I think then my dear Sister, you should write to us. I think if a regular correspondence was kept up it would be happier for us all. Why should relations (and at a such a distance too) ever be at variance. If my last letter offended you, which I doubt not it did by your never answering it, I am very sorry; but the weeks, months, I may say nearly years which have elapsed since that period have quite erased from my memory the tone in which it was written.

“I do not mean by mentioning this to recur to unpleasant things, on the contrary I wish the past to be forgotten and the future to witness nothing but kindness on all parts. All we wish to hear is of your welfare and happiness and I think you will allow it is a very natural wish. I appeal to what you yourself will feel when you receive this letter, will you not feel a pleasure and a great one too in hearing of the welfare of your Brothers, and in hearing of the health of your Father—in hearing of the good health and very long life which is granted to your Aunt? I am sure you will, and you may judge thereby what we should all feel in receiving any communication, however small, which brought to us the joyful news that you, Mr. W. and Mary are well.

“I will say no more at this time else the very many changes which have occurred, the disasters which have befallen many in these parts, would furnish subject sufficient to fill my remaining page. But in the pleasing hope of hearing from you I will now conclude, with kindest love to yourself, Mr. Waters, in which I am joined by all.

“I remain,

Ever your affectionate Sister

Alice Butterworth”⁶⁶

We learn a few extraordinary things in this letter. First, that apparently Elizabeth has not written in more than a year, and she has not told her family about her third pregnancy and delivery of a boy, Joseph, on April 15, whom Thomas and Elizabeth have obviously named for her father.

66 Letter. Alice Butterworth to Elizabeth Waters. October 22, 1819.

Perhaps this isn't surprising given what had happened with Jane. Perhaps Elizabeth was suffering from depression and just didn't have the energy to communicate with her family, rather than feeling any real enmity toward them. Whether Elizabeth blames her family in some way for Jane's death isn't known, but it is directly after the baby's death that she seems to cut off ties.

If they followed customs of the times, Elizabeth and Thomas would have worn formal mourning clothes as prescribed by custom and would have remained in mourning for one year following Jane's death.⁶⁷ We can envision an image of a melancholy Elizabeth assembling Christmas presents for her family in her black mourning clothes, perhaps more out of habit and duty than any real spirit of the season.

Suffering & protest in post-war England

After the end of the Napoleonic Wars on June 18, 1815, British citizens are faced with widespread poverty and unemployment, due to soaring prices for goods like grain and the sudden return of some 300,000 soldiers and other military staff. This economic depression was the main trigger for the growth of radical protest in England.⁶⁸ The ongoing situation is sharpened later by a bad harvest and severe weather.

John Sillifant refers to this when he reports to Thomas, "In consequence of a very unproductive & bad Harvest, corn is advanced amazingly & the poor are much distressed. I much fear it will increase as the winter advances."⁶⁹

The situation becomes more dire over the next two years. From descriptions in two December 1819 letters from sister Alice, Elizabeth learns how the Butterworths have been affected. Winter has set in with "unusual severity" and her father Joseph is in some financial straits:

"Trade here is very bad, tho' much better than the Neighbourhood. When the People are employed in weaving Cotton they are literally starving & unless Trade should alter, I am afraid of some serious mischief. Robberies are become common & daring. We have now lying here a part of the 54th Regt.

67 *Dust to Dust: Celebrations of Death in Victorian England*. Walvin, James. In *Historical Reflections*. Vol. 9, No. 3. (Fall 1982). P. 363. Found 3/21/21 at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41298792>.

68 *Political Protest in the Age of Peterloo*, Salmon, Philip. The History of Parliament website. Found 10/5/20 at <https://thehistoryofparliament.wordpress.com/2019/07/09/political-protest-in-the-age-of-peterloo/>.

69 Letter. John Sillifant to Thomas Waters. December 15, 1816.

(Waterloo lads) which gives the Townspeople a degree of Confidence that they had not before. A meeting is advertised to be held at Middleton on Monday next upon the pretext of that lately held in S. [unreadable] Fields London. I wish it may be a peaceable one.”⁷⁰

“My Father never knew what it was to want until this last two years. Trade has been uncommonly bad, and he has had serious thoughts of giving it up. It is at present rather brisker. When he has it in his power to send you need not fear he will do it.”⁷¹

And more dangerous-sounding news in Alice’s letter about “disasters which have befallen many in these parts”:

“I doubt not that you have heard about the Reformation. People are very much alarmed in these parts as it was expected they are about to rise; the time is midnight, which sounds very awful. Last Monday they and great preparations were made in Manchester and the adjoining towns, however they did not come.

“We hear that 60 Lancers from Manchester came to Bury and broke up the Union Rooms where there was a large multitude assembled, they took 10 men Speakers and are in search of 50 more.

“The soldiers in Manchester have not been undressed nor their horses unsaddled these ten nights. They think themselves strong enough to subdue the soldiers: in that respect we fear them not, but in the attempt many lives might be lost all unprepared to quit this scene of existence.”⁷²

The “Reformation” she refers to is a result of growing tensions between the government and its citizens. During this period of social unrest and political protest occurs “one of the most infamous episodes in British political history,”⁷³ and it happens in Manchester, only fifteen miles from Elizabeth’s family home in Rochdale. It becomes known afterward as the St. Peter’s Field (or Peterloo) Massacre.

On August 16, 1819, a large, peaceful pro-reform rally forms in St. Peter’s Field, to which 60,000 people eventually flock and assemble, including many

70 Letter. Alice Butterworth to Elizabeth Waters. December 17, 1819.

71 *ibid.* ‘It’ refers to money owed to Elizabeth for double postage she had to pay on her previous letter to them.

72 Letter. Alice Butterworth to Elizabeth Waters. December 19, 1819.

73 *Political protest in the age of Peterloo*. Salmon, Philip. The History of Parliament website. Found 10/4/20 at <https://thehistoryofparliament.wordpress.com/2019/07/09/political-protest-in-the-age-of-peterloo/>.

women and children and a contingent of women's rights activists. The event turns deadly when over-anxious constables on horseback charge the crowd and begin shooting. The activists are particularly easy targets as they had dressed all in white. By day's end, at least fifteen men and three women are dead and more than 600 are seriously injured.⁷⁴

Having read Alice's previous letter of December 19 to Elizabeth, we know that this unrest continues after this bloody summer day.



Alice Butterworth writes to her sister Elizabeth (Butterworth) Waters about the Peterloo Massacre in 1819. This is a coloured engraving that depicts the massacre. Manchester Libraries. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

74 Manchester had become known for its peaceful (and not so peaceful) union action in the textile manufacturing industry. Riots in 1812 had begun in the Manchester Exchange when a mob broke into the Exchange, setting it on fire. This then spread into a strike and food riots. In the summer of 1819, the area has been more or less peaceful, but the Home Secretary nevertheless puts local constabularies on high alert for some months before the massacre. For more, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peterloo_Massacre.

Chapter 4

The Lean Years

ON AUGUST 4 BACK IN 1814, only a month before his wedding, Thomas is put on furlough for seventeen months—he isn't called back to active duty until January 1, 1816.

While unemployed, Thomas considers getting into manufacturing himself (perhaps with his soon-to-be father-in-law?), about which John Sillifant expresses concern—especially if it means Thomas choosing to leave the Royal Marines:

“I confess we were a little surprised to find you are about to engage in a Manufactory. We wish you every success in the undertaking. I cannot give an opinion on the subject as I am totally unacquainted with the nature of it. I only hope & trust that it will not be necessary for you to quit the Marine service, as from the sudden change that has taken place on the continent it is very probable you may again be called into service...”⁷⁵

Sillifant is likely referring to the vigorous, but waning, days of the Napoleonic Wars, which will end on June 18, 1815, at the famous Battle of Waterloo with Napoleon's surrender to the British. The end of the wars causes many thousands of British naval officers to be furloughed, a system known as going on half-pay. In this way, the Navy was able to keep their experienced officers until they needed them again. Because merchant seafaring paid better and often had better working conditions, the Navy had to compete to keep officers. So instead

75 Letter. John Sillifant to Thomas Waters. March 1, 1815.



The Battle of Waterloo in 1815 ended the Napoleonic Wars, which caused many Naval officers, including Thomas, to be essentially laid off—being put on “half pay.” “Battle of Waterloo 1815” by William Sadler. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

of laying them off, they continued to assure them of at least half-pay without having to work until they were called up again.

Royal Navy officers (lieutenants like Thomas and above), were paid for their non-active service each quarter after 1814. Half-pay was calculated according to rank and within each rank there were several levels of remuneration. At his rank, Thomas would’ve been paid between five and seven shillings per day—roughly £19 10 shillings each quarter. (Today this would be the equivalent of about \$11,500 CAD annually. This would lead us to believe that his full pay annual salary as a lieutenant would have equated to the today’s buying power of \$23,000 CAD.)⁷⁶

When on half-pay officers were not bound by naval laws and were able to refuse a posting to a ship. However, by doing so an officer risked losing his entitlement.⁷⁷ Perhaps his commission is what John Sillifant is concerned Thomas might lose if he decides to go into manufacturing.

How much belt-tightening this pay reduction causes the new couple is not clear; Thomas still gets his stipend from Sillifant. However, being thrifty with money is a priority of his; presumably this habit is instilled in him at a young age by the Sillifants. Thomas’ sister Mary describes him as a “housekeeping

76 Calculations reached using these tools: https://www.retrowow.co.uk/retro_britain/old_money/sterling_calculator.html & <https://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/> on 8/21/21.

77 *Royal Navy Half-Pay*. The Napoleon Guide. Found on 10/13/20 at https://www.napoleonguide.com/navy_rnhalfpay.htm.

man,” and so shares with him the price of various goods in her town of Bath in a letter:

“I must tell you that mutton is 8 pence per. lb.; Apples 3d per peck; flour 7/4d per peck; potatoes 14d per peck. I go to market now and then. Pigeons 3d a couple.”⁷⁸

A growing family; another loss

On February 16, 1817, Thomas is again furloughed on half-pay for what will turn out to be six years. During this time the young family grows, with three boys joining their older sister Mary. Joseph is born on April 5, 1819, and John on June 24, 1821, both at No. 14 Kingsland Place in Southampton. The family moves later in 1821, this time to a more rural setting in Marchwood, New Forest in the Parish of Eling, near Southampton. This is where the third son, Thomas Jr., will later be born.

Elizabeth receives what will be the last known letter from her father on November 20, 1821, giving us a glimpse into their new circumstances in Marchwood:

“I hope you will like your new Situation very well, but I think you will find keeping a Cow more troublesome than you imagine, & more expensive, for if the Newspapers speak true, you are in a Country where every necessary of life is stated at one half less than here, which makes me conclude that Produce is cheaper for the buyer than it can be produced...”⁷⁹

Joseph is suffering from what he has referred to in the past as gout:

“My illness is a swelling of my Legs which I got on a visit into Rossendale. I went with Mr. Munn 2 Days on to the moors a shooting, which from the wetness of the weather, I found soaking wet. They began to inflame very much & I had to return Home sooner than I intended. The inflammation has entirely left, but the swelling still continues particularly towards Evening. I hope in a short time they will be well.”⁸⁰

78 Letter. Mary Totness to brother Thomas Waters. January 10, 1813. In British currency, the “d” is an abbreviation for *pence*, the plural of *penny*. Similarly, “s” is an abbreviation for *shilling*.

79 Letter. Joseph Butterworth to Elizabeth Waters. November 20, 1821.

80 *ibid.*

Happily, the depression and political situation has improved somewhat, as he describes:

“Trade here is good in general & all very peaceable—we have no Soldiers. In the cotton manufacturing districts they are lowering wages, which was unexpected, but it is all times subject to fluctuation more than the woolen.”⁸¹

There is no further correspondence until the sad news on January 21, 1823, that Elizabeth’s father has died. A letter arrives from Joshua Thomas Horton, a friend of the family and presumably a suitor of Alice’s, who has written to Thomas, asking him to give the news to Elizabeth:

“I have the painful Duty of informing you that Mr. Butterworth departed this life yesterday evening of a quarter before eight o clock. He had been declining, as you already know, during some months; but had grown rapidly worse since Wednesday last.

“It will be consoling to you and his Daughter to know that his last moments were calm and peaceful, and that he resigned his breath with composure, as an Infant sinking into undisturbed sleep.

“I have taken the liberty of writing to you, that you might break the melancholy tidings to Mrs. Waters; and that her Brothers and Sister might be spared the office of so sad a communication. The funeral is fixed for Friday next, as they have all desired, and I have ventured to engage that the attendance either of you or yours was all but impracticable, at so great a distance and in so inclement a Season...”⁸²

Four days later, Thomas responds to Mr. Horton, saying:

“I have communicated to my Wife the melancholy tidings of her father’s decease. It affects her much, but I hope and trust the Almighty will support her under her affliction...we wish much to have attended his remains to his last Home, but my Wife is not well, the distance is great and the interment must have taken place the day on which I received your letter, yesterday...”⁸³

Thomas returned to work at Woolwich, 120 miles away from Southampton, on March 12 that year, only five days after Thomas is born on March 7, leaving

81 *ibid.*

82 Letter. Joshua Thomas Horton to Thomas Waters, Sr. January 21, 1823.

83 Letter. Thomas Waters, Sr. to Joshua Thomas Horton. January 25, 1823.

Elizabeth with the struggle of managing meagre finances and her growing brood. She won't see her husband for a long time, because a year later, on January 8, 1824, Thomas leaves for three and a half years. He will patrol the Coast of Guinea on the thirty-six-gun fifth-rate frigate *HMS Maidstone* to fight what remains of the maritime slave trade.



Thomas' next journey begins on *HMS Maidstone*, built on the same model as the *Magicienne*, shown here in the painting, *Launch of HMS 'Magicienne' at Fishbourne*. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

Costs of corresponding

Thomas receives a letter from Elizabeth while waiting to sail on *Maidstone*, which he comments on, demonstrating a bit of the parental attitude toward his much-younger wife evident in their communiques. He is now forty-three and she is twenty-six. Much as he might say to one of his children, he writes:

“Your letter is a very good one. There are a few faults in the spelling, but I am not very worried on that score myself. You need not be at all ashamed of your writing, and besides you will improve...”⁸⁴

Of course, we can't assume that Elizabeth had much education or experience with writing, so perhaps this was in fact a kind encouragement on his part. In any case, this signals the beginning of what will be a life-long correspondence that creates the treasure trove of history that family members enjoy today.

Though we have nearly 200 of Thomas' letters, we have only a few of Elizabeth's. There were clearly many more than have survived, but even the few we have are valuable in understanding a bit more about their lives. The letters can be short and fast-paced (often written when there was little time) or long and full of seemingly unimportant details. The author of *Shore Wives* gives a description of some of the nuances that can be read underneath the words themselves:

“Feeling the pressure to write, both partners could be reduced to filling space. It is possible that in these long and somewhat boring letters, the partners were being dutiful, but it is also possible that they were trying to prove their loneliness, true or not. Again, the letters show the shore wives and their husband's consciousness of the effects of separation and how each wanted to be perceived. Wives, even when describing pleasurable events, often ended with the caveat that it would have been much more enjoyable had their husbands also attended. They were careful not to be seen as having too much fun while home alone, lest their husbands believe they were not truly missed.

“However, near-constant correspondence was the only way to maintain a marriage across such distances. For both sides, even the monotonous details about wind direction or the children's writing skills may have been welcomed.”⁸⁵

Of course, Thomas and Elizabeth only have one way of staying in touch while Thomas is away, and that is by writing letters. This would continue to be the case with communications for many more decades, until the telephone and long-distance calling would become commonplace in the 1900s. So, letter-writing was the lifeline between distant family members and friends. A great deal of the content in Thomas and Elizabeth's letters deals with the daily household issues, payment of bills, management of the household, education of the children, and family news.

85 *Shore Wives: The Lives of British Naval Officers' Wives and Widows, 1750-1815*. P. 36. Smallwood, Amy Lynn. Wright State University. Found 12/22/21 at https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/etd_all/851.

Vigorous correspondence between naval husbands and their shore wives was necessary, and was considered an important part of a shore wife's job, in addition to many additional duties not assigned to wives whose husbands were present:

“These ordinary women, from middling or gentry classes, could find themselves ennobled, celebrated at court, publicly celebrated or humiliated, or tragically widowed. Required to patriotically and stoically see their husbands off to war, they were left with the responsibility of not only running their homes, but also managing finances, often through agents and other intermediaries, actively participating in naval patronage networks, and using power of attorney to make capital investments, all while maintaining a very active correspondence with their absent husbands, which required an extensive knowledge of winds and geography in order to ensure that their letters arrived.”⁸⁶

Through the course of their correspondence, there are times when the cost of postage is raised as an issue between Elizabeth and Thomas—people reimbursing each other for having paid postage, looking for ways around the cost of mailing a letter, or reducing the cost.

This seems strange, as today's postage is relatively inexpensive in comparison with other goods, however in the 1800s and particularly during the Napoleonic Wars, it was in fact a dear expense. Hefty taxes had been placed on postage and during the wars, this income was regarded as a tax levied to help the war effort.

Once Napoleon is defeated, there is a backlash against the high rates. By this time, it was often hard to decide if it was worth sending a letter at all: the cost of a letter could be as much as a day's wages for a working man. It became a matter of importance to get around the cost in one way or another.⁸⁷ To Thomas and Elizabeth, it must have been more like dealing with today's cell phone and internet bills.

Another 'cost' of correspondence in this fashion was the length of time it took for letters to be dispatched, travel the great distances, and be responded to. It was difficult to know how long it might take letters to reach their destination:

⁸⁶ *ibid.*

⁸⁷ *The Cost of Living in Jane Austen's England*. Found 12/4/20 at <https://janeausten.co.uk/blogs/landscape-and-property/the-cost-of-living-in-jane-austens-england>.

“The speed with which letters traveled between a naval officer and his wife depended on many factors, including where the officer was stationed, the means of transportation, and the wife’s location. Determining the best way to control these factors could be extremely complicated.”⁸⁸

Thomas numbered and dated his letters to help Elizabeth sort out what he had received from her when. She might receive letters out of order, as might he, and so this numbering system helped them keep comments in context.

A final cost was an emotional one, for both parties:

“The shore wives participated in both personal and public letter writing on a massive scale. Correspondence between naval officers and their wives are invaluable sources in analyzing the lives of this group of women, and the fact that the primary form of communication for months or even years was limited to a written form with irregular delivery is significant. It illustrates the level of frustration each may have had with the other, which might manifest itself in additional pressures for the wife.”⁸⁹

Both Elizabeth and Thomas waited to hear from each other, sometimes anguishing over the fact that they hadn’t. In one instance, Thomas is most frustrated when he has not heard from Elizabeth in a year. He lashes out in a letter to her:

“My Dear Wife

I am very much vexed at not having received a letter from you for so many months past, the last was dated the 9th of August and now it is almost August again...”⁹⁰

The remainder of this letter gives Elizabeth specific directions on how to get letters to him. Thomas ends with:

“...my time afloat thanks to the Almighty is fast sliding away, but still I think it is best in the mean to keep up a good understanding between us, both for your benefit and mine hereafter - I now trust in the gracious

88 *Shore Wives: The Lives of British Naval Officers’ Wives and Widows, 1750-1815*. Smallwood, Amy Lynn. Wright State University. P. 33. Found 12/22/21 at https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/etd_all/851.

89 *ibid.* P. 32.

90 Letter. Thomas Waters to Elizabeth Waters. June 18, 1825.

Almighty that a more regular correspondence will be carried on between us for the future without cause of uneasiness.”⁹¹

Six months later, he receives a packet of letters from Elizabeth which have clearly been substantially delayed in transit, some having been written a year prior. Even though Thomas must have felt some shame at misdirecting his anger to her, there is no outright apology in his next letter, and he changes the subject immediately. Though perhaps the more affectionate address is as much crow as he is willing to eat:

“My Dearest Love

I received five letters from you the 11th of this month, the first of them dated the 8th of Dec. last year. I am delighted to find you have such good friends in Mrs. Nicholls and her excellent Mother.”⁹²

91 *ibid.*

92 Letter. Thomas Waters to Elizabeth Waters. December 18, 1825.

Chapter 5

Fighting the Slave Trade

ON MAY 1, 1807, slavery is outlawed in Britain. It is now against the law for any British ship or British subject to trade in enslaved people. Full emancipation of slaves won't occur until 1838, however, five years after the passage of the *Slavery Abolition Act* of 1833 that abolishes slavery within the British Empire.

Prior to that, the slave trade had been big business. British historian Martin Meredith explains:

“In the decade between 1791 and 1800, British ships made about 1,340 voyages across the Atlantic, landing nearly 400,000 slaves. Between 1801 and 1807, they took a further 266,000. The slave trade remained one of Britain's most profitable businesses.”⁹³

The slave trade was also vigorous in France, until the British captured the final French-held island in the Caribbean at the Battle of Guadeloupe on February 6, 1810, after ten days of bloody battle. This battle is reported to Thomas in one of the messmate letters from James Le Visconte:

93 *The Atlantic Slave Trade: Abolition*. Meredith, Martin. Found 3/4/21 at <http://www.bricktothepast.com/blog-to-the-past/the-atlantic-slave-trade-abolition>.

“As the *Vesta* is to sail tomorrow for Bermuda, I take the opportunity of sending you a few lines to say we are still jogging on in the old way, and we are all extremely dull and not a prize to be met with.

“We have heard by the *Vesta* of the capture of Guadeloupe. The Army was a week taking it and lost about 500 men...”⁹⁴

The Royal Marines became responsible for patrolling the seas to find and capture slave trade ships, and free slaves. *Maidstone* is sent to patrol the African coast, to attempt the capture of slave ships entering or leaving the port at Cape Coast, off the coast of Guinea.

The journey to get to Africa is long, arduous and fraught with danger—from extreme sea weather to encountering slave traders to shipwreck against unseen rocks. This trip would take Thomas to the Island of Madeira off the coast of Spain, to Tenerife, to Sierra Leone and finally to Guinea, and specifically the port near the notorious Cape Coast Castle.

Thomas’ travelogues

It’s here that we first encounter Thomas’ extraordinary ability to observe his often-exotic surroundings and capture in writing colorful snapshots of life in different parts of the nineteenth century world. In today’s world, he would have made an excellent travel writer.

Shipboard life is hard work, but, as Thomas writes to Elizabeth from Madeira, they have a band to cheer them up: “We have a pretty good band of music belonging to the ship, 4 or 5 of them are Marines, one of them a Rochdale lad of the name of Grindrod blows the Bassoon...”⁹⁵

Their voyage has been remarkably fast, so they must have had favourable winds: “We have made a very quick passage twelve hundred miles from Plymouth to Madeira in six days.”⁹⁶

Arriving in Madeira, Thomas describes the Portuguese-held island, which had belonged to Britain up to 1814:

94 Letter. James Le Visconte to Thomas Waters Sr. February 20, 1810.

95 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. April 12, 1824.

96 *ibid.*

“...The only town, Funchal, lays in the centre close to the water’s edge. The background is dotted with houses in the midst of gardens filled with vines running over sticks placed like the roof of a house. The town has plenty of excellent water and I do not know in a hot climate a greater treat than a glass of good [water]. The town has no sort of wheel carriage that I could see, but they have a kind of small sledge without wheels for carrying burdens, drawn by a yoke of Oxen. They have some small horses for riding and donkeys for carrying burdens up the mountain.

“Myself and some of my messmates dined on shore with a Wine merchant who came passenger with us he gave us an excellent dinner, and before we left Madeira he made our mess a present of a pipe of Wine the price of which would have been £46.

“I saw a great many women and children without shoe or stocking washing clothes, both fine and coarse, in a large brook. The water, not very clean, running in the middle they had no kind of tub or pan to wash their clothes in, nor anything to heat the water in nor any fire, but they soaped their clothes on any stone was there and then rubbed and rolled the linen well on the stone, and when the dirt was hard to get out of the stockings or other things they beat the stones with it and again rub it on the stones. Afterwards they lay it in the brook on each side of the water to dry.

“The chief Wine merchants are Scotchmen they have no vineyards but have to buy their wines from those who grow the grapes and press it. They have various sorts from very good to very bad...”⁹⁷

It is from a letter posted from Sierra Leone that Elizabeth first learns Thomas’ assignment will last three years, rather than the one year it had sounded like from his departure letter. He writes, “...I have brought myself to think that it is only six and thirty short months at most when I hope in the Almighty to have the sweet felicity of being with you again for some years...”⁹⁸

This might well have been a blow to the twenty-six-year-old mother, left alone with four young children. But, as he reminds her, “I do not regret being separated a little while from you, knowing that it is for our mutual benefit...”⁹⁹

Thomas has bigger things to worry himself about now, however, as he has arrived in a hotbed of tribal conflict with the British that has already exploded, with the most morbid and terrifying of outcomes.

97 *ibid.*

98 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. May 3, 1824.

99 *ibid.*



The battle scene from the First Ashanti War in 1824 where Charles MacCarthy is killed. A contemporary Italian drawing of part of the battle. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

The Ashanti Wars

On January 21, 1824, just five months before Thomas' arrival on *Maidstone* to Sierra Leone, Sir Charles MacCarthy, British military governor to territories in West Africa which includes Sierra Leone, is killed in the Battle of Nsamankow with the Ashanti tribe. It is part of the first of what would become known as the Anglo-Ashanti Wars.

J.T. Williams, the colonial secretary, is held prisoner for several months, locked in a hut which he shared with the severed heads of MacCarthy and Ensign Wetherell, kept as trophies of war. MacCarthy's gold-rimmed skull is later used as a drinking-cup by the Ashanti rulers. On his return, Williams relates that he had survived only by being recognized by an Ashanti chief for whom he had done a small favour and was therefore spared.¹⁰⁰

Thomas writes to Elizabeth about the wars, which continue:

“The war is carrying on with the Ashantees about 15 miles off, but I do not believe the squadron will have anything to do with it. Sir Charles McCartney [sic] the late Governor was killed about 150 miles in land, he was much respected as a Governor and he was so completely infatuated that he thought all the Africans were ready to worship him.

“Therefore, under that persuasion he marched so far in land through trees in bushes with about 10 or 12 hundred black troops, merchants and heads of departments, with very little ammunition, but a good band of music

100 *Battle of Nsamankow*. Wikipedia. Found on 7/13/20 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Nsamankow.

for the purpose of making peace, when all at once they found themselves in the midst of a wood completely surrounded by the Ashantees and were in consequence cut to pieces...”¹⁰¹

Accounts describe 10,000 Ashantis fording a river and attacking when the British and other native troops ran out of ammunition. It’s interesting to note that Thomas concludes this morbid description (and the letter) with “I hope my sweetest Love, you and our tender children are well...” We can only imagine his account of this violent and unstable territory that was her husband’s destination must have truly frightened Elizabeth.

On July 20, *Maidstone* arrives again at Cape Coast. They discover here that the Ashantis have attacked again while they were away, on July 11:

“It appears the Ashantees made an attack upon Cape Coast Castle on Sunday the 11th. They were beaten back after a great loss of blacks on both sides and one European Officer on our side. It is said the Ashantees are gone to their own country...”¹⁰²

Upon arrival a month later in Sierra Leone, Thomas refers once more to the Ashanti:

“...Everything was quiet at Cape Coast Castle. The Ashantees do not find themselves a match for European Tactics. They have been obliged to retire, but it is expected they will make a fresh attack in the course of a few months when they have recovered their strength. It is said they wish much to make peace with us, but we and they do not know how to do it.”¹⁰³

Begun in 1823, the Anglo-Ashanti wars continue for sixty-seven years, off and on, until 1900. This one involving Thomas is the first of the five wars, and it lasts from 1823 to 1831.¹⁰⁴

Trade & the Cape Coast Castle

Bartered trading, goods for goods, is the common practice between natives and mariners as there are no common world currencies in the 1800s. Thomas

101 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. May 29, 1824.

102 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. July 22, 1824.

103 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. August 21, 1824.

104 A future son-in-law of Thomas’, the Reverend Thomas Pyne, will have a connection to these wars, which is described in Chapter 19.

mentions this trade several times in letters. On May 29, he describes Sierra Leone upon their arrival May 2:

“...the country round looks beautiful, from the water, and the town does not look amiss...We find it very hot here. Pineapples a halfpenny each, they grow wild, as well as Oranges, limes etc. Cheap cotton handkerchiefs and ship’s tobacco is kept to traffic with...”¹⁰⁵

He also describes a native royal visit at Cape Palmas, on the coast of what is now Liberia, and their trading with the natives:

“His Majesty King Waw came on board to pay respects to the Commodore, canoes in great numbers came bringing a little fruit, a few vegetables, a few fish fowls... Elephants’ teeth etc. They would have nothing but tobacco & handkerchiefs in exchange.”¹⁰⁶

Mary Totness had sent good wishes to her brother at his departure from England, and she also alludes to the darker trade of humans:

“I hope you will have at the cruel wretches if they dare venture at the horrid traffic of our fellow creatures. Can’t you scramble for a pocket full of the [gold] dust? ‘Spose you carry some & make the exchange. As the adage goes, half is no robbery. Adieu my dear Brother & may God of his Great Mercy restore you safe to the comfort of your domestic circle, at the time prescribed...”¹⁰⁷

The large quantity of gold dust found in Ghana is what primarily attracts Europe, and many natives of Cape Coast use this to their advantage. In exchange for gold, mahogany, other locally produced goods, and enslaved captives, local Africans receive clothing, blankets, spices, sugar, silk and many other items. The castle at Cape Coast is a market where these transactions take place.

But the Castle also holds the dark distinction of being a storage area for slaves waiting to be shipped off the continent. Inside the dungeon of Cape Coast Castle, hundreds of slaves are held in cramped conditions before being transferred to boats bound for the western hemisphere. There are several other similar “slave castles” along the Gold Coast.

105 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. May 29, 1824.

106 *ibid.*

107 Letter. Mary Totness to her brother Thomas Waters Sr. March 25, 1824.



Cape Coast Castle, as rebuilt by the British in the eighteenth century. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

Enslaved Africans are a valuable commodity in the Americas and elsewhere, and slaves are the main trade in Cape Coast. Due to this, many changes are made to Cape Coast Castle, which had originally been a trading post built in 1555 by the Portuguese. One of the alterations is the addition of large underground dungeons that can hold as many as a thousand slaves awaiting export. Many European nations had flocked to Cape Coast to get a foothold in the slave trade.¹⁰⁸

Thomas leaves Cape Coast on June 3, 1824, arriving the next day in Accra, Ghana. Ghana was one of the African countries to protect slavery for a century after¹⁰⁹ it was outlawed by the British. They are only there a few days, but his description of Accra shows yet more ways in which slaves are utilized: “Horses are scarcely to be found on the coast of Guinea it is said the climate and food will not agree with them. The gentry are drawn in carriages by six black men...”¹¹⁰

Maidstone captures slave traders

The first recorded capture by *Maidstone* is September 26, 1824, detaining the Portuguese Brig *Aviso* with 465 slaves on board bound for Bahia, Brazil. By February 1825, nearly 2,000 men women and children had been released from captured vessels by Thomas’ ship.

Further examples from 1825 include two Dutch vessels—*Bey* on May 19, 1826, and *Z* (formerly *Pauline & Amanda*) on July 31, 1825—the master of the former

108 *Cape Coast Castle*. Wikipedia article. Found 9/35/20 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cape_Coast_Castle.

109 *The Slave Trade in Ghana: Landmarks, Legacies and Connections*. Taylor & Francis. Found 9-07-20 at <https://doi.org/10.1080/01440390902818930>.

110 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. July 22, 1824.

was actually onshore purchasing slaves—and a Spanish schooner, *Gallego*, on September 29, 1825. It had been bound for Havana with 285 slaves.

There are no letters from Thomas during this time, so this information comes via external research sources. Other ships captured by *Maidstone* are *Creola*, *Venturoso*, *Tentadora*, *Carlota*, *Providencia*; *Conceicoa Paqueta Rio*, and *Hoop* on January 3, 1826; *Perptuo Defensor* on April 18, 1826, and *Nicanor* on May 25, 1826.¹¹¹

While *Maidstone* could outgun any slaver afloat, much of the work was done by her boats, and this could be much hairier. On August 6, 1826, *Hope*, the tender¹¹² to *Maidstone*, sighted the Brazilian *Brig de Guinea*, and gave chase. After twenty-eight hours, she caught and attacked the brig, despite being worse armed and having half the crew, and although it took a “desperate action” of two hours and forty minutes, she succeeded. Other ships caught in the remainder of the four-year tour included *Hiroina* on October 17, 1826; *Paulita* on December 6, 1826, and *Trajano* on March 14, 1827.¹¹³

The estimates for the number of African slaves freed from these interceptions is somewhere between 4,000 and 5,000 from some twenty-three vessels.¹¹⁴ Captain Sir Charles Bullen, Thomas and the crew of *Maidstone* and its boats certainly contributed their fair share of work in emancipating slaves in the dreaded Middle Passage.

Conditions for slaves on ships

At least two million Africans (10–15 percent of all enslaved people) died during the infamous “Middle Passage” across the Atlantic, which was dangerous and miserable for the slaves. Of those, 15–30 percent never even made it to the ship, dying during the march to or confinement along the African coast.¹¹⁵ Altogether, for every one hundred slaves who reached the New World, another forty had died in Africa or during the Middle Passage.

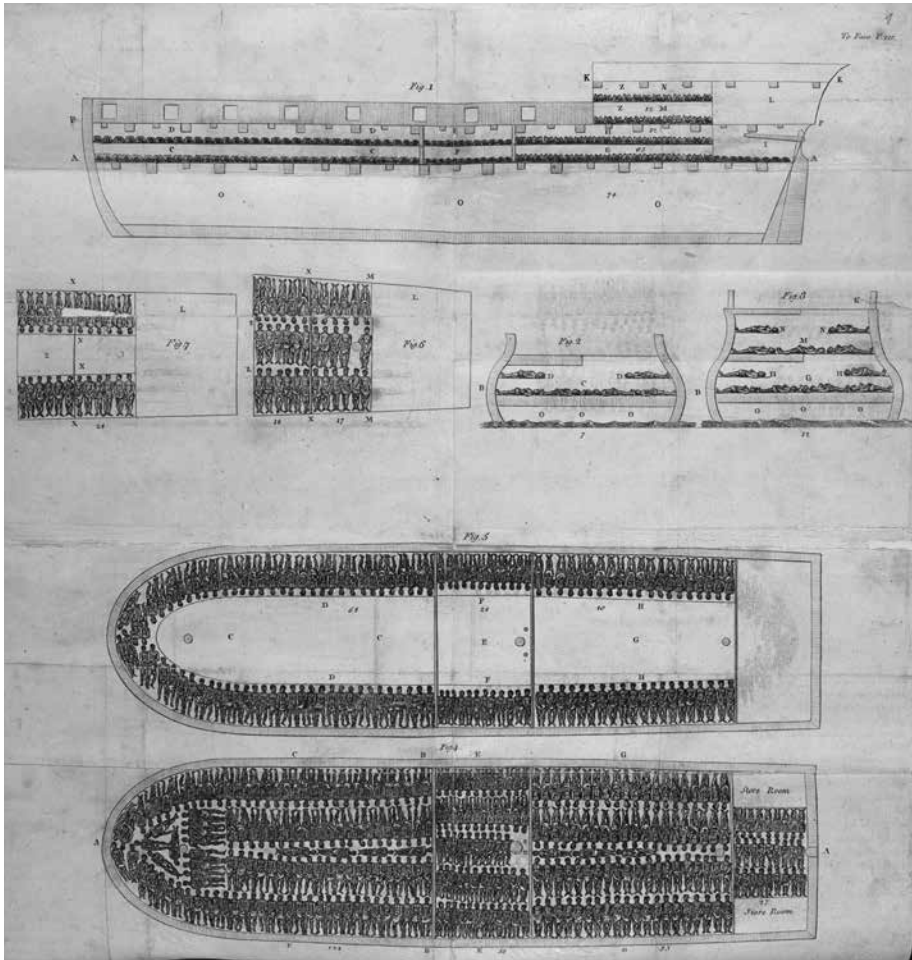
111 *About 2428 Slave Trade Vessels Detained by the RN*. Roots.web. Found 12/18/20 at <https://sites.rootsweb.com/~pbtyc/SlaveTrade/STReport1.html>. All ships of the time seem to have multiple spellings.

112 A ship’s “tender” was a boat.

113 *Acta Militaria*, Lambert, Nelson. Found 8/12/20 at <http://nelsonlambert.blogspot.com/2011/06/africa-hms-maidstone-part-2.html>.

114 The Author consulted numerous sources which contributed to collecting these statistics, including Thomas Waters’ own diary, the *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, the *Nelson Lambert Blog* and the *Rootsweb.com* listing of more than 2,000 slave trade vessels detained by Royal Navy vessels. For the complete research, see *Thomas Waters Sr. & Maidstone - Freeing Slaves* at mywatersfamily.com.

115 *The Middle Passage*, University of Houston Digital History. Found 7/25/20 at https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtid=2&psid=446.



This image was produced to illustrate how enslaved Africans destined for the Americas were crammed into the hold of the slave ship *Brookes*. It shows 454 people, the maximum allowed by British law from 1788. In fact, the *Brookes* carried as many as 609 at one time. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

In the ship's hold, the sexes were separated, kept naked, packed close together, and the men were chained for long periods. One typical design allowed for 609 slaves to be kept in the hold, with inches between them and ten inches of vertical space above them, as shown in the image above.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ *Historical Context: Facts About the Slave Trade and Slavery*. Mintz, Steven. The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. Found on 7/25/20 at <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/teaching-resource/historical-context-facts-about-slave-trade-and-slavery>.

Sometimes, even if the British ships ran a slaver down, they couldn't save the slaves. A horrifying account passed down presumably through the family to Thomas' granddaughter, Amaret "Amy" (Waters) Hewson, was shared by her more than a century later to her son and daughter-in-law:

"...We have been looking thro' old things...There was a dagger wh[ich] had been found in a slave ship. For some time, he was in a Man of War off the W. African coast & they used to try to intercept the ships laden with slaves. They were not allowed to take them before they sailed.

"Sometimes they were successful & the slaves were freed—but at other times they either got away or before catching up to them, a line of sharks would be noticed & when the ship was reached there would be no slaves on board. They had all been thrown over the side & the hold of the ship freshly limewashed..."¹¹⁷

Prize money is an incentive

A lengthy and complex system of awarding prize money to captors of slavers involved a captured ship being sent to England for "condemnation," which had to occur before the prize money could be awarded. In wartime, all involved ships in the legion split the prize money; however, in peacetime only the captor ship got the spoils. Cases that were disputed went to court, which lengthened the amount of time before the ship's crew would receive the prize money and the slaves became "liberated Africans," with a variety of different circumstances.

Thomas benefits from these prize money payments, which he mentions on several occasions. After capturing the *Aviso* and two other ships smuggling goods, he writes:

"[I] received 3 and a half Dollars prize money for the smuggler...The slave vessel is arrived and condemned, a prize to us. We have another vessel, not a slaver, of very trifling value condemned to us, for smuggling."¹¹⁸

We get a look at the lengthy time between capturing a ship and getting paid out the prize money, which Thomas receives on December 11, 1825:

117 Letter. Amy (Waters) Hewson to her son and daughter-in-law Geoff & Susan Hewson. August 8, 1940.

118 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. March 21, 1825. The dispute over the spoils of *Aviso* between *HMS Maidstone* and *HMS Bann* is described here: <http://nelsonlambert.blogspot.com/search/label/HMS%20Maidstone>.

“I believe I have five or six and twenty Pounds, due to me about this time—prize money for a slaver taken a year and a half ago. And we have taken, and had condemned, two prizes since I last wrote to you, but we shall not get anything for them [for] some time to come, as we have to wait their final condemnation in England.”¹¹⁹

Faith in God & anti-slavery

Faith plays a major role in Thomas’ life and the lives of his family and community. The Waters live in an era of extreme religious upheaval in Europe. John Wesley had founded the Methodist Church in 1738, and there are many enthusiastic ‘revivals’ in the nineteenth century. Though we don’t know what denomination Thomas subscribes to, most people in England at the time are members of the Anglican or Presbyterian Church, although there are some Catholics and increasing numbers of non-conformists—for example, Quakers and Methodists.¹²⁰

William Wilberforce, a powerful Quaker reformist in England in the mid-century, is responsible for moving England toward the abolition of the slave-trade and slavery, which provides Thomas his purpose as a lieutenant, captain, and then major in the Royal Marines: patrol the seas to find and capture slave trade ships, release the slaves and bring the traders to justice.

Ascension Island & Captain Nicolls

In the early months of *Maidstone’s* tour, the ship docks at the remote British territory English Bay, Ascension Island, from October 21-25, 1824, presumably to refit the ship and supplies. Though he is only there four days, it turns out to be a significant event that has implications not only for Thomas’ future, but Elizabeth’s as well.

The Royal Navy uses the island as a victualling station for ships, particularly those of the West Africa Squadron working to suppress the transatlantic slave trade. A garrison of the Royal Marines has been based at Ascension since 1823

119 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. December 18, 1825.

120 *Religion in the 19th Century*. Found 11/15/20 at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/znjnb9q/revision/5#:~:text=Most%20people%20were%20members%20of,for%20example%2C%20Quakers%20and%20Methodists.>



This is the only known portrait of Nicolls.
Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

and Colonel Edward Nicolls has become the first Royal Marines officer to become commandant.

On the morning of Oct 22, 1824, at 5:00 a.m., Thomas and others from ship take a trek on the island, where trees would be planted twelve years later by Charles Darwin on his famous trip around the world in *HMS Beagle* to create a natural humidity from which to make clean water. Thomas describes the outing:

“Commodore attended by myself & other Officers went on shore, took a cup of cocoa with the Colonel & proceeded to the Green Mountain. The Commodore & his Chaplain on donkeys the Colonel & the rest of us on foot in Smock frocks & duck trousers & plated hats made of the leaves of cabbage trees with a long staff in our hands...We visited one of the springs. It affords 142 quarts in 24 hours. It is produced by the constant dripping of water from the edges of a kind of slate from the side of the Green Mountain. The mountain is supplied from occasional showers & very frequent morning dews & thus the water is collected by means of a chute into iron tanks.”¹²¹

The “Colonel” is Colonel Edward Nicolls, who has become known as “Fighting Nicolls” for his many battles and battle injuries during the Napoleonic Wars. He would be later promoted to general. He and his wife Eleanor were both from Northern Ireland. He is an active abolitionist—Nicolls Town, in the

121 This was, until Darwin arrived in 1836, the only source of fresh water on the island.

Bahamas, is named for him. Its founders were former slaves that Nicolls had helped to liberate and reach British territory where they were free. He would be given the honorable title of Brevet General at the end of his career.¹²² He is knighted in 1855; becomes Sir Edward and his wife becomes Lady Eleanor.

Patronage & promotion

Sir Nicolls is a powerful, admired figure, and on that day, Thomas spends enough time with him on the expedition for the Colonel to come to admire and respect Thomas.

He is undoubtedly influential later in Thomas' promotion, and this may have had something to do with a relationship that Elizabeth is directed to develop with Nicolls' wife, Eleanor, who also lives in Woolwich.

In November 1824, Nicolls tells Thomas to encourage Elizabeth to send letters to Thomas via Nicolls' own wife, Eleanor, who also lives in Woolwich.¹²³ Thomas does so, and Elizabeth does indeed reach out to Eleanor.

It will become a life-long friendship between the two women who have much in common. They live not far from each other, and Eleanor is mother to seven children of her own. But this relationship may have also helped ensure future promotions for Thomas and at least one opportunity for their children—an eventual teaching opportunity for their daughter Mary.¹²⁴ There may have been others that we don't know about; in several letters from Joseph to his parents from sea, he asks to be “remembered to Mrs. Nichols [sic].”

This patronage practice was another common duty assigned to shore wives:

“In the absence of their husbands, officers' wives became virtual agents of naval patronage. The practice was so widespread in the eighteenth century that it is hard to believe that anyone, especially someone from the aristocratic or middling classes, would be unfamiliar with it. Yet being aware of the practice and knowing intimately how it worked were two different things.”¹²⁵

122 Nicolls has been described by Peter C. Smith in a history of the Royal Marines as “possibly the most distinguished officer the corps ever had.”

123 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. November 2, 1824.

124 This incident will appear later in the story.

125 *Shore Wives: The Lives of British Naval Officers' Wives and Widows, 1750-1815*. Smallwood, Amy Lynn. Wright State University. P. 54. Full paper found 12/22/21 at https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/etd_all/851.

As Elizabeth was herself from a prominent family, it is likely she was familiar with the practice. As Smallwood writes in *Shore Wives*:

“Even though there were minimum terms of service and examinations in order to reach the rank of lieutenant in the Royal Navy, the eighteenth-century British navy ran on patronage... the influence of well-connected aristocratic women was used to gain promotion from those qualified commissioned officers. These were exactly the type of women... with who shore wives sought a connection.”¹²⁶

“Patronage was practiced by men and women during the eighteenth century. Women, like men, sought the five Ps of patronage—place, pension, preferment, Parliament, and peerage—with the object of obtaining something for themselves, something for their family members, or something for others. Judith Lewis puts it more bluntly, asserting that ‘wherever one looks, there were women helping men get placed in life’.”¹²⁷

126 *ibid.* p. 55.

127 *ibid.* p. 54.

Chapter 6

The Home Front

“She gloried in being a sailor’s wife, but she must pay the tax of quick alarm for belonging to that profession which is, if possible, more distinguished in its domestic virtues than in its national importance.”

—JANE AUSTEN, LAST LINES OF *PERSUASION*, PUBLISHED 1818.

While Thomas is capturing slave ships for four years, Elizabeth’s life can’t be described as much less difficult. We know from numerous letters between them that Elizabeth and one or more children are nearly always ill of some malady or another. We strongly suspect that Elizabeth suffers from depression, as there are several allusions to her mental state in numerous letters from family and Thomas.

She must have told him she was unhappy, as he writes to her from Sierra Leone:

“I hope, my dearest Love, you feel more contented and happy than you were when you wrote the last letter which I received. I cannot flatter myself with the hope of seeing you this year, but you know one third of my time afloat is gone and the other two thirds will soon slide away, when, I trust in Providence we shall have many happy years in each other’s society.”¹²⁸

As the four children are growing up, there are issues of which schools to attend, and management of the children still at home during the day. Elizabeth needs to hire help, with whom there are trust issues. A woman is hired at one

point who apparently would not nurse the babies, and therefore was not as useful as she might have been. Another time, something very important has gone missing and it is feared a servant has made off with it:

“I rejoice my dearest love that my ring has been so serviceable to you, it was laying by in the drawer, an idle thing, but by means of it you have got rid of two bad subjects and I hope gained as much prudence as will last you the next two years, I cannot help thinking how fortunate you are if that is your greatest loss; The man must be a fool, or a rogue more likely if he lost his place in the Duke of Portland’s family after holding it for seven years and then to list for a common soldier and if what he said was not true he was imposing on you; (your letter of the 1st of May mention your suspicion of the woman’s making free with your coal;) do not by any means seek after their characters for if they are good I cannot perceive any use that they would be to you now, and if they are bad you may gain a further loss as the man and woman may be the cause of more trouble to you; people of base minds are apt to be malicious if they find that you are prying into their characters, therefore, better be still, when you have not sufficient power to protect yourself and to bring them to justice; thank God that the ring has been brought to so good an account, for I think you are exceedingly fortunate if it cost you no more to get two rogues out of your house, and pray that they may cause you no more inconvenience; for my part I never allow anyone, yourself excepted, to see where I keep my money or valuable trinkets, excepting a few shillings in my desk for present use; it is a pity to tempt children or poor people with the sight of much money or pretty bawbles [sic] which it is not intended for them to have however much they may desire it, (and they are very likely to desire it,) and yet allow them the means of helping themselves, and in some measure inducing them to commit the crime of theft, indeed I think the locking of places is but of little use if the keys are not well secured in your absence, but you my love of course are more careful, I must not imagine you to be in want of judgement in such matters.”¹²⁹

A month later, another reference seems to indicate that the ring had great sentimental value to Elizabeth; it’s possible it may have been her wedding ring:

129 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. September 3, 1832.

“I can easily fancy that your feelings were indeed painful when after going with all the cheerfulness imaginable for your Husband’s ring, which I am sure, as a token, you highly prized, to show your visiters [sic] and found that it was gone; the distress of your mind affected me very much, but as the loss was in itself trifling...”¹³⁰

Thomas’ advice regarding the health of his wife and children focuses primarily on diet and exercise. He comments on nutrition especially often over the years, and this description shows his beliefs about what is and isn’t healthy food. He writes to Elizabeth from St. Thomas, and his advice sounds surprisingly contemporary:

“Johnny, I am sorry he is no better. I am afraid he has too many cakes and other confectionary trash. Do desire your folks to send no more of it. A few pence to buy them fruit would do the children a thousand times more good.

“In fact, the other stuff is downright poison. Let them have plenty of fresh air. Let them dig in the garden there they can do no hurt... Recollect what a weakly little child John was when he was born and yet what a good health he nearly always enjoyed. Do not stuff him with more food than his tender stomach can digest. Let not their food be cloying. Give them all as much ripe fruit as you can afford and they can relish, and vegetables.

“If you give them cake let it be of your making, as plain as possible. With respect to eating do not entice the boy’s appetite...”¹³¹

He continues with this advice after his own health habits:

“I attribute my good health under Providence in a great measure to the regularity of my bowels, and I recommend you, of all things in that respect to attend to yours and your children’s. If you attend to that and keep the pores free, I think, under the Almighty good you will have nothing to fear...”¹³²

130 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. October 20, 1832.

131 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. May 7, 1826.

132 *ibid.*

Money management

There continue to be financial constraints, which, by all accounts, twenty-eight-year-old Elizabeth seems to manage quite well, despite her lack of penny-pinching experience, having grown up in a wealthy family.

It seems that Elizabeth took in boarders, as Thomas says in December 1825, “You did right to take a steady Marine and his wife until you could suit yourself better.”¹³³

Their former landlady in Portsmouth has apparently tried to cheat Elizabeth, and Thomas is upset at both the landlady and his wife:

“It was a shameful thing of our late Portsmouth landlady in demanding 5£ rent of you, she well knowing that I had paid all that was due, and she saw me the day we quitted her premises therefore had there been any back rent, or indeed, had she thought there had been any due to her, she would then have said so...”¹³⁴

Then, he lectures Elizabeth: “...however it will improve you in a lesson I have taught you, that is, get receipts when you pay money and take care of them...”¹³⁵

But Thomas also praises her. Following a visit Elizabeth makes to her family in Rochdale just before Christmas 1825, her husband writes:

“I cannot conceive how you contrived to travel so cheap, you must have had great firmness of mind to have ventured so far on the outside of a coach. I am not at all displeas'd at your going to Rochdale as I am convinced you did it from a very proper feeling of humanity, and affection towards your Aunt, to whom I think you and your brothers owe a great deal. I wish your finances would have enabled you to have traveled with more comfort to yourself, as it is, I thank the Almighty that you returned safe.”¹³⁶

We see the tender side of Thomas as well as it relates to his children:

“Do not kill them with kindness, do not be too angry with them if they come in with dirty shoes or soiled clothes. If John is very tender let him have flannel next his skin.”¹³⁷

133 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. December 18, 1825.

134 *ibid.*

135 *ibid.*

136 *ibid.*

137 *ibid.*

More family losses

Elizabeth's state of mind can only be made worse by the news in 1826 that her twenty-six-year-old sister Alice has died of consumption. Elizabeth is again dealt this blow by letters after the fact. Her brother Benjamin writes to her first with the sad news. It is followed by a curious letter from Joshua Thomas Horton, who appears to have been Alice's suitor, writing to Elizabeth to tell her of Alice's final days:

“You already know that for many months past there has been no possible hope of her recovery. The nature of her disorder, and the unhappy bias of her family constitution, appeared to render that all but impossible, in human judgment.”¹³⁸

But there is another motive for this letter. Joshua presents a picture of Alice as an extremely religious young lady, who apparently wishes Elizabeth would improve her behavior—especially where her own religious comportment is involved. In fact, a significant reason for the letter seems to be Joshua's need to pass on a posthumous lecture. Indeed, he indicates that he “(as I am inwardly assured) promised her [Alice] that I would do so.”¹³⁹ We don't know if Alice was really as self-righteous as he makes her out to be, but it seems clear that *he* is:

“She often talked of you. Was very anxious about your condition, desired ardently that you would deport yourself prudently under very delicate & perhaps cruel circumstances—that you would live in the fear of God, and the faith of his everlasting Son, and that you would bring up your Family in the same walk, and point their spirit to those joys, which can only be sought and attained through his merits.

“With all this she wished it not to be disguised from you that she had fears for your Religious condition, that you have not been attentive to religious ordinances, that perhaps you have imbibed some perilous notions on these points, and most earnestly did she pray that if this be the case, you will call your thoughts home, rally all your energies, and from henceforth during your abode on earth walk as becometh a convinced and sincere Christian, conscious that the all-seeing eye of God ever rests upon you and discerns your conduct and your virtues.”¹⁴⁰

138 Letter. Joshua Thomas Horton to Elizabeth Waters. February 18, 1826.

139 *ibid.*

140 *ibid.*

There is no other evidence, outside this hearsay commentary, that Elizabeth is anything other than as good a Christian as her siblings and it's impossible to corroborate the truth of Alice's views as expressed by Joshua from any of Alice's letters. And, other than the period of silence following her baby Jane's death, Elizabeth has shown no rebelliousness that Alice has remarked on in any archival documents.

One wonders what are the "very delicate and perhaps cruel circumstances" that he refers to; what religious ordinances Elizabeth has not been "attentive to," and perhaps most of all what are the "perilous notions" Elizabeth has "imbibed" on.

During the winter of 1827, Elizabeth hears from her brother Benjamin regarding the health of their Aunt Ann, who at eighty-six years old has become quite frail and is showing signs of mental instability. He describes her condition in ways that are both gently humorous and touchingly sad:

"Her appetite is much worse than formerly she dozes & sleeps a great part of the Day & towards Evening she does nothing but dress & undress—herself she is altogether an altered person since you were here & I am afraid from her advanced age & her health failing her she will not be long spared to us..."¹⁴¹

In another example of reaching across the ages, it is fascinating how familiar these symptoms are today to anyone who has experienced dementia in a loved one:

"I am sorry to inform you that during the last week my Aunt's Health has undergone a material change. Her mind his entirely lost to her & it is with difficulty that two people can keep on her clothes or prevent her from undressing. She has no complaint on her therefore I think it is a necessary consequence of old age, still her appetite has gone on a great deal worse. She eats little & scarcely knows any one about her. I don't think her in the least danger at present; still her mind is gone entirely."¹⁴²

Loneliness & keeping up with the Joneses

In the summer of 1826, Elizabeth asks Thomas if she and the children could come to stay with him at Ascension Island. He writes a letter that spends several

141 Letter. Benjamin Butterworth to sister Elizabeth Waters. February 24, 1827.

142 Letter. Benjamin Butterworth to Elizabeth Waters. December 14, 1827.

paragraphs describing the conditions there to impress on her that she's much better off where she is.

"...I am at a loss to know how our children are to be educated at Ascension, books we may carry with us but how are we to procure instruction for their plain Arithmetic, they must have a better education and so much lost time cannot be regained, besides enervating them by a tropical climate, a subaltern has only one room with a small top over it, to which you ascend by a ladder. Your dwelling placed in the midst of a sandy hill and plain the sea at the front the Mountains in the rear perfectly open excepting its being joined by other houses you may go miles without seeing the least sign of vegetation, no market to go to, every thing served out according to your share and nothing more in short you can form no conception of the place it looks like a wild Chaos, with the exception of the small open mountain in the midst of the Island, the rest is all barren. Col. Nicholls is doing all he can for the improvement of the Island and I have no doubt in the course of years it will become a respectable place but for the present think yourself happy where you are."¹⁴³

Elizabeth is feeling abandoned, as we see from the opening of this letter:

"I hope your mind by this time is pretty well relieved from anxiety on my account and that you are convinced I am not disposed to neglect you. No one can be more anxious to make his Wife happy than I am..."¹⁴⁴

Then he alludes to her having compared their situation to other military couples, whose husbands send home gifts to their wives. Apparently, Thomas has not done so. He is piqued and responds this way:

"You mention that the men's wives get rings, beads, shells etc. from their husbands. It may be so, but you should consider, my dear, our circumstances. My mess costs me between forty and fifty pounds a year, a small debt I owed my agent before I left England...I never passed myself off to you as rich, therefore, you must know it requires all my carefulness to support our respectability..."

"As for shells, good ones are not to be had on this coast. At Ascension they are met with from the India ships. The beads are brought here from

143 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. May 28, 1826.

144 *ibid.*

England. Rings I cannot afford to buy...money I allow you all I can, consistent with our mutual dignity. We must not suffer ourselves to be dazzled with trifles, therefore, I hope you are above such baubles.

“If we ever get rich, we shall be able then to please our fancy...For myself I leave you to judge of my affection by your own...”¹⁴⁵

He must have been considering another tour to Ascension (or perhaps she wants him to, given that her friend Mrs. Nicolls is going there to be with her husband Commander Nicolls), because he writes:

“You wish to know how I would like to go to Ascension for six years. Not at all. I hope to get my promotion before I visit foreign parts again and any remaining subalterns’ tours would be of no use to me. I must serve abroad as Captain before I am entitled to sea-credit for that rank...”¹⁴⁶

Clearly, career progress is at the forefront of his mind.

The seafarer returns

By the winter of 1827, Elizabeth seems to be reaching the end of her rope and aching for her husband’s return, which he now says will not happen before spring:

“I do not expect to be in England before the middle of spring neither do I altogether wish it, as I think the sudden extremes of cold from the extremes of heat might have a serious effect on my health.”¹⁴⁷

Thomas concedes that things have been rough for Elizabeth, but that he presumes she is also happy to have gotten through it, even though he is sorry she is depressed:

“What a house of sickness you must have had! And what a happiness it ought to be to you that you have gone so well through with it. Thanks to our gracious Almighty, strength of mind will overcome all difficulties.

“Sorry am I indeed to find you in such excessive low spirits and still more sorry am I that you should be in such an ill state of Health. I most fervently pray to the Almighty that you may soon be better...”¹⁴⁸

145 *ibid.*

146 *ibid.*

147 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. February 1, 1827.

148 *ibid.*

Perhaps Thomas' greater maturity is only due to his older age. Perhaps Thomas is more stoic than Elizabeth, or her depression is a constant debilitation. Perhaps the weight of raising so many children alone is just too much for her. But these themes—his reprimands regarding her complaints—will permeate their letters for the rest of his naval career, at least from what we can see from his perspective, which is the only one (barring a handful of letters from Elizabeth herself) that we are able to directly draw from.

In August 1827, *Maidstone's* crew has returned from its mission and is paid out. Because he is home, we have no correspondence between the couple during this period, but there are a few pieces of information we do have.

After Thomas returns, the family moves from Southampton to 21 Mulgrave Place, Woolwich, and on September 22, 1827, he begins a new era of work for three years as a recruiter for the Royal Marines. During this time, the couple will have two more children—Benjamin, born July 4, 1828, and Elizabeth, born September 23, 1830.

Elizabeth & Mary Totness

On several occasions, Thomas expresses a wish that his sister and wife could have a friendship, but it's not clear that this ever transpires in a significant way.

Elizabeth and Thomas indeed invite Mary to visit them for one day in 1828 during a brief time Thomas is at home in Woolwich, but she declines:

“My dear Brother, Having reconsidered, I must decline your kind invitation for Thursday to a future day, perhaps the Nov. week, if you are then at Woolwich I may have the pleasure of paying my respects to Mrs Waters, but the limited week will not this time allow me conveniently to range...”¹⁴⁹

Thomas receives her response to their invitation on May 7, and Elizabeth replies on their behalf, by writing back to her in pencil on her own letter (commonly done to save paper). This is the only known letter from Elizabeth to Mary. She indicates (politely, if not a bit tersely) her feelings about her sister-in-law's negative RSVP:

“Your Note we yesterday received and are sorry it should not be convenient to you for to have spent but one day in Woolwich. Shall expect to see you

149 Letter. Mary Totness to Thomas Waters Sr. May 6, 1828.

in November and trust you will then make it convenient to spend a few days in our Family. I thank you for your kind Present. Mr Waters joins me in affectionate regards, Yours sincerely, Eliz Waters”¹⁵⁰

The sisters-in-law do have some correspondence, but there isn't much to indicate a friendship ever develops between them. In 1832, on his next tour, Thomas will write Elizabeth from Napoli, Italy:

“I am glad that you have received a letter from my Sister. Make my love to her when you write again. I believe I did not tell you I wrote to her last summer, imagining it would be soon enough when I received her answer, and as she did not write, I conceived you would be hurt at her apparent indifference. Therefore, I said nothing to you about it, although I must own that I thought she would write to you, or call on you, one time or another, from not getting a letter from her myself, for I am confident that her nature is not unkind. On the contrary her disposition is generous and independent.

“The disturbances, so disgraceful, at Bristol, an account of which I have read in the public papers, must have given her great uneasiness. I hope she was not a material sufferer from the outrageous conduct of the mob. I dare say you would be happy to see her, should she be inclined to pay you a visit, and desirous to make her comfortable as long as she might be disposed to remain with you.”¹⁵¹

Elizabeth does make a trip with children Joseph and Mary to visit Mary in 1833:

“Give my love to my Sister, when you write to her, I am glad you called on her in Town, it must have been a fine treat for the two children, it was kind of you to take them, I hope Joseph behaved well, for Mary I have no doubt; I think you managed your jaunt exceedingly well...”¹⁵²

To which, Elizabeth replies:

“I am glad you are not displeased with our visit to your Sister she occasionally writes indeed I received one from her last week, with an inclosed [sic]

150 Letter. Elizabeth Waters to her sister-in-law Mary Totness. Undated.

151 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. February 10, 1832.

152 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. August 16, 1833.

one for Miss Sillifant, desiring me to direct the same to the place you called upon them, she very politely sent it unsealed saying you can look it over: if not too much occupied she had not written to the Miss Sillifant for years and this was an invitation for them to visit Clifton describing the beauty of the place and telling them how commodious her house is two drawing rooms and two parlours which she lets to a single Lady who has occupied them since May but is now going to leave she keeps two Servants, complains that business is very bad, very bad indeed she told them how Thomas was and w[h]ere stationed.”¹⁵³

Mary, cholera & the Bristol Riots

Sometime in 1832, Mary moves her milliner’s business up to Clifton at 1 Upper Gloucester Place, presumably to both be closer to her home and possibly to escape the riots that have erupted in downtown Bristol:

“My Sister, one would think, is a little alarmed at the recent turbulent conduct of the Bristolians, but she has beat her retreat in an orderly and deliberate manner and taken up a position among the salubrious hills of Clifton, where she may look down on the good Cits and rest secure and contented amidst the storms of Cholera and contention etc. with all the imaginary ills of this life.

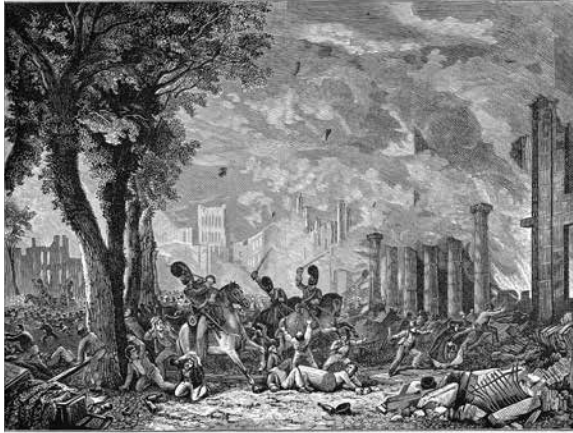
“That she will maintain her ground I have no doubt as her spirit of firmness is inexhaustible. She thinks I am improved in my epistolary style. No wonder my sweet love, when inspired by you and with an angel for a correspondent.

“Make my respects to my Sister...”¹⁵⁴

The riots Thomas describes are the Queen Square riots of 1831. An angry mob of 500 arose to protest the rejection of a bill in Parliament that would have given more residents of Bristol and other cities the right to vote. At that time, only 6,000 of the 104,000 population could vote. A magistrate who had opposed the bill was chased by the mob to Queen Square where he narrowly

153 Letter. Elizabeth Waters to Thomas Waters Sr. September 30, 1833.

154 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. June 8, 1832.



Mary Totness is alarmed by the Bristol Riots, shown here being violently quelled by the 3rd Dragoon Guards. Courtesy Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

escaped. The mayor called in the cavalry, and by the end of three days of skirmishes, as many as 500 people were killed by fires set by the rioters. Four rioters were killed by cavalry and another was wounded. The Lieutenant in charge of the cavalry later shot himself before he and other leaders could stand for their court martial.¹⁵⁵

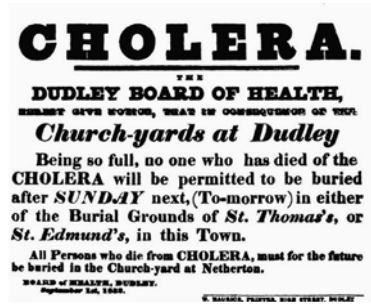
All this was happening in the middle of a cholera outbreak (as Thomas notes) which hits England in November 1831 and lasts through 1832.

It is significant for several reasons: not only is it the first cholera epidemic to reach the United Kingdom, but it is set amongst one of the most turbulent socioeconomic periods in history. This was a time when the population began to voice their grievances and raise their expectations. As the Bristol Historical Society writes:

“William IV had become King after the death of George IV. The cry for reform was in the air and the Reform Bill was eventually passed through Parliament in 1832 after three attempts. The fear of cholera and the need for reform became increasingly entwined. In fact, the idea that government was using the cholera to divert the public’s attention from reform was a popular misconception.”¹⁵⁶

155 For more, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bristol_riots.

156 *The 1832 Cholera Epidemic and its Impact on the City of Bristol*. Hardiman, Sue. (Bristol Historical Society, 2005). For more, <http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/History/bristolrecordsociety/publications/bha114.pdf>.



Notice dated September 1, 1832 from Dudley, near Birmingham, indicating that the two graveyards were so inundated with the corpses of cholera victims that no further interments could be undertaken in the immediate future. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

The plague reaches Bristol on July 11, 1832. Bristol already has the unenviable reputation of being the third unhealthiest city in England, with poverty-stricken slums and the stench of fecal matter being poured by the sewers into the River Frome.

Even if Elizabeth and Mary don't become great friends, it's clear that Thomas has high regard for his sister and her independence:

“...on the contrary, my Sister's dependence was on her own exertion, and when she, I believe unexpectedly, received a pretty little fortune, she did not become slothful, but rather redoubled her exertion to gain herself a more comfortable independence, and should she not succeed, she will enjoy in her retirement the very pleasing satisfaction that she has done her best.”¹⁵⁷

In 1838, Mary Totness will retire to Weston-super-Mare and live at 5 Water Temple with a thirteen-year-old servant called Eleanor Adams,¹⁵⁸ and in 1851 she is living at Church Road where she describes herself as an annuitant.¹⁵⁹

157 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. October 20, 1832.

158 *The Waters Family. Volume 1.* Turvey, Sheila.

159 *ibid.* On Jan 5, 1866, Mary Totness dies in Axbridge, England at age 86, at Meadow Cottage, Weston-super-Mare, where Caroline Heywood has looked after her as she battled bronchitis for four weeks. She leaves no will.

Chapter 7

The Voyage of *HMS Barham*

ON JULY 22, 1830, Thomas is promoted to Captain,¹⁶⁰ and on March 27, 1831, he sails on a new ship from which he will tour the English Channel and the Mediterranean for just over three years. In what will be a very different, but equally colorful journey, Thomas will encounter exotic sultans and convey one of the most famous of all authors from Ireland to Italy.

On the cusp of his fiftieth year, Thomas takes to sea on *HMS Barham*, a fifty-gun third-rate ship of the line.¹⁶¹ For the first year they patrol the Channel from both Spithead and Portsmouth, but then on October 29, 1831, they sail finally from Spithead en route to Italy, where they will patrol the Mediterranean.

On board is a special and unusual passenger—one of the most celebrated poets and authors of the time who is still revered as one of the world’s literary greats: Sir Walter Scott.¹⁶²

160 *Statement of Service*. British Royal Marines.

161 In the rating system of the Royal Navy, a third rate was a two-decker fifty-eight-gun ship of the line. Years of experience proved that the third-rate ships embodied the best compromise between sailing ability (speed, handling), firepower, and cost. *Barham* had been modified as a fifty-gun ship. For more: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Third-rate>.

162 Sir Walter Scott was a Scottish historical novelist, poet, playwright and historian. He wrote many famous works which have endured, such as *The Lady of the Lake*, *Ivanhoe*, *The Bride of Lammermoor* and *Rob Roy*. For more: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Scott.



The *HMS Barham*, sketched during a squall on the morning of October 26, 1833. Part of a series of sketches by Charles Frederick de Brocktorff of Barham that year. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

Sir Walter Scott

Scott was a Scottish novelist, poet, historian, and biographer who is often considered both the inventor and the greatest practitioner of the historical novel. At this point in his life, he is at a physical and emotional low point, having lost his fortune, his wife and a son, and having suffered a series of debilitating strokes. He hopes that this voyage will help him to recover from some of these great losses.

Unbeknownst to Thomas, Captain Basil Hall, a “naval friend” of Sir Walter Scott’s, heard of Sir Walter’s plans to go abroad and “unobtrusively contrived” to have King William’s government put a frigate (*Barham*) at Sir Walter’s disposal.¹⁶³

Thomas is excited and proud to have such a distinguished celebrity on board, and he writes about him multiple times through the two-month journey. The colorful descriptions of Sir Walter and their experiences are best portrayed in Thomas’ own words:

“We sailed from Spithead after having received on board Sir Walter Scott and a son who is a major of Hussars, and a daughter of his. I understand he has a son and daughter besides those who are with him. We are not a little proud at having such an illustrious passenger on board. He is very lame and can but with difficulty walk. He requires to be helped up and down stairs, he has had, I believe, an apoplectick [sic] attack.

163 *Blue Heaven Bends Over All*. Oliver, Jane. (Putnam, 1972). P. 376.



A portrait of Sir Walter Scott and his deerhound "Bran" painted by Sir John Watson Gordon in 1830, near the time of his voyage on *Barham*. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

"He cannot, when walking, bring his right heel to the ground. He is a stout, mild, benevolent looking man, no way distant, very thankful for any little attention paid him. His age, I should think, about sixty. He is a widower.

"We are glad to get round him when he comes on deck, where he sits down with a classical book in his hand and his spectacles on.

"He lives, of course, with the Captain, indeed, it was His Majesty who offered Sir Walter a passage to Naples in the *Barham* when it was made known to him that Sir Walter intended [word illegible]."¹⁶⁴

He continues...

"I had the pleasure of being invited in company with him at the Capt's table the day after he came on board but was sadly disappointed for within two minutes after sitting down to dinner he was obliged to retire from the table in consequence of a slight degree of sea-sickness which prevented him from returning to the table for that day; his hair is white; his features are not handsome; any person who has once seen him will easily recollect him, I should suppose an artist would find it easy to take a correct likeness of him, and I am told there are some very good likenesses of him in the print shops; he wears a blue cloth scotch bonnet..."¹⁶⁵

164 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. October 31, 1831.

165 *ibid.*

This journey on *Barham* is corroborated by an account in Jane Oliver's book *The Blue Heaven Bends Over All*:

“On the 23rd of October they all arrived in Portsmouth, since Sophia was determined to see the party off, and Walter joined them there, to board HMS Barham. Contrary winds prevented them from sailing for a week, the Bay of Biscay behaved as usual, and everybody was seasick. But once they were in smooth water again, heading for Malta, Sir Walter was the first passenger on deck.

“Malta enthralled him. The entries in his Journal were becoming almost illegible now, but he tried to record his delight in all the available records of the Knights of St. John, in the ancient streets of Valetta, the Church of St John, where the knights were buried, the Strada Stretta, where they fought their duels. When they went on board the Barham again, to sail on for Naples in December, he looked intently at every medieval detail of the beautiful harbour, as if he were trying to fix them in his mind. Half to himself, he murmured: ‘It will be hard if I cannot make something of this.’”¹⁶⁶

Sight-seeing tour

The voyage to Naples includes stops in Gibraltar, Algiers and Malta—all famous and exotic locations that Sir Walter is eager to see. Thomas writes about him and the locations with equal elegance, and we can envision the journey through his eyes.

As they approach Gibraltar, Elizabeth learns a bit more about Sir Walter from her husband:

“Sir Walter has been lame from his infancy. He is about sixty-two.¹⁶⁷ His memory, I understand, begins to fail him. When sitting down on deck he has generally a book in his hand reading either French or English. He is very cheerful, and I think is gaining strength.”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ *Blue Heaven Bends Over All*. Oliver, Jane. Putnam. 1972. P. 376.

¹⁶⁷ Sir Walter had polio as a child, which accounts for his lameness. The journey was a vain attempt to cure his poor health. He is, in fact, at the time of this journey, sixty years old, and upon his return to England from this journey, on a different ship, will suffer a final stroke and die at his home, Abbotsford, on September 21, 1832, at age sixty-one. For more: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Scott.

¹⁶⁸ Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. November 29, 1831.

Thomas uses his travels and his writing to help educate the children, and perhaps keep a connection with them by being able to follow his travels from home. He writes in the same letter:

“From what I could see of Gibraltar I was not at all struck with its appearance. On the contrary, I was rather disappointed, considering, how celebrated it stands in the page of history, and what an exceeding expense it is to Government, producing nothing of value. No doubt it has excellencies which I am incapable of duly appreciating. It appeared to me a rude, ill-shapen substance of small extent (its bay is fine). It is attached to the European continent by a slip of sand and is distant from the opposite or African shore about 12 miles. Joseph will find its history in Guthrie’s grammar and its situation in the map of Europe.”¹⁶⁹

They are not able to come off the ship at Gibraltar on November 14, but the Captain makes sure they get as close as they can for Sir Walter’s sake:

“...[we] stood well into the Bay to give Sir Walter an opportunity of taking a near view of the place. The Capt. made a signal for a boat from the shore to land a passenger but when the boat came off, we learnt that ships from England were subjected to seven days quarantine. Consequently, the passenger could not be landed at all as the Capt. was not disposed to wait so many days, and no doubt his orders would not allow him. We immediately made sail and proceeded up the Strait...”¹⁷⁰

Thomas next comments on his impressions of Algiers and Malta, the last two stops before Italy:

“November 17—We had a view of Algiers. The mountains at the back and sides of it appear like a crescent. The city is of a form resembling a triangle, the base of which resting on the brink of the sea, the hypotenuse running up the hill on the South-East, the other side a little curved the convexity outwards. Some of the edifices seem splendid but the streets very narrow, the people in general, I am told, taking their walks on the terraced roofs of the houses. The country in the neighbourhood of the city looks very pretty from its rich vegetation and its being thickly bespangled with houses, all of them white, as they are, indeed, in the city.

169 *ibid.*

170 *ibid.*

“November 20—We saw Graham’s Island, a place which has been recently thrown up from the sea by a volcanic eruption. Sir Walter landed on it. The Island was fast falling away. There was no fire or smoke to be seen but water, perfectly salt, boiled or bubbled up, and sent forth steam of a sulphurous [sic] smell. Cinders, sand and ashes only were seen with dead shells or boiled fish...”

“21st—We arrived at the famous Island of Malta, the place where St. Paul was shipwrecked, and truly a more extraordinary place I never saw, it has a most formidable appearance, the principal harbour, having a very narrow entrance, is nearly surrounded by vast fortifications lofty walls magnificent houses rising above others etc. etc.”¹⁷¹

But the passengers and crew will not be able to take a boat from the ship to the island for seven days:

“On our arrival we were placed under quarantine. 28th We were admitted to Pratique, (Mary will find the word in the French dictionary,) that is we were let out of Quarantine. Same day We gave Sir Walter a grand entertainment.”¹⁷²

Quarantine & pratique

Since the fourteenth century, quarantine practices—essentially separating the sick from the healthy—were used to combat the spread of infectious diseases. The word *quarantine* was, in fact, invented by the Venetians who instituted a practice of holding ships in port for forty days before allowing their crews and passengers to disembark. They called it quarantine, from the Italian words for “forty.”¹⁷³

Later, the French named the practice of allowing a ship’s passengers to disembark into the port city *pratique*, or free pratique.¹⁷⁴ A ship’s captain that believes its passengers to be free from contagion flies a square yellow flag, and then health officials can board to give the clearance if they are satisfied.

171 *ibid.*

172 *ibid.*

173 *The History of Quarantine*. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Found 1/3/20 at <https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/historyquarantine.html>.

174 This practice is still in use today and has been utilized for cruise ships during the Covid-19 pandemic. For more, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pratique>.

At this time there are numerous plagues. Cholera is perhaps the most prevalent, and ships most often are made to quarantine before being allowed into a port city, given that they are the means for disease to spread across oceans.

At the writing of this book, our world is still undergoing a twenty-first century pandemic, that of the spread of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19. As of July 2022, more than 6.5 million deaths have occurred worldwide since its outbreak late in 2019. It is the first pandemic since the Spanish flu pandemic in 1918, but before that, outbreaks of contagious disease that spread around the world were common and lethal—effective vaccines were only first invented during Thomas and Elizabeth’s time to combat smallpox.

The magic of Malta

In Valletta, Malta’s capital city, Thomas sees some strange sites, which he details in a later letter to Elizabeth on January 3, 1832:

“This is the first time I ever saw a horse kneading bread; at the Navy biscuit bakery, the dough is put into a round wooden trough where a wooden wheel loaded between the spokes, with five hundred weight of lead, is worked round upon it by a horse.”¹⁷⁵

Finally, they arrive in Italy on December 13:

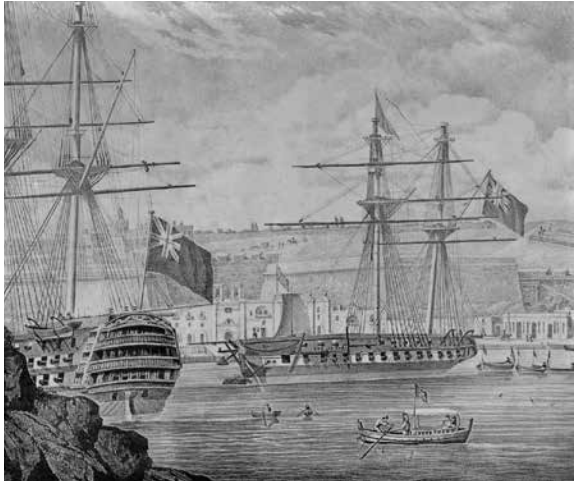
“We sailed, having Sir Walter with his son and daughter on board. December 16—Had an interesting view of Aetna, distant about 30 miles. Snow on the top of the mountain was perceptible, and smoke was seen issuing. At night we saw Stromboli, burning furiously.

“December 17—We arrived at the beautiful Bay of Naples, said to be the finest in Europe and were placed under quarantine. In entering the Bay, the magnificent City of Naples is on the left, spreading down to the water’s edge.

“From the hills above on the right is Vesuvius, the foot of which reaches, also, to the water, with buildings of all sorts extending from one point of the entrance of the bay round to the other point. Vesuvius was continually emitting a great quantity of smoke, and occasionally at night flame, at times fierce.”¹⁷⁶

175 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. January 3, 1832.

176 *ibid.*



H.M.S. Barham in Malta Harbour. September 25, 1833. Thomas Waters is on this voyage. The image also depicts a second vessel and several pinnaces. This view is another from the series depicting the voyage between England and Constantinople, starting in 1831 by Charles Frederick de Brocktorff. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

On Christmas Eve, they are finally permitted to disembark, having been admitted to pratique, and Thomas goes ashore on the twenty-sixth. It is here that *Barham* will part ways with Sir Walter. Thomas writes a final post about Naples, and Sir Walter:

“I think there is much grandeur, much want of cleanliness, and what we would call comfort; and some want of taste among the English families of distinction and fortune who reside there, excepting those whose residence is but for a short time.

“December 25 and 26 saw the lava pouring down one of the ravines of Vesuvius in a stream of fire. It is daily expected there will be a grand eruption, as the crater is full of lava. The foot of the mountain is, across the water, about seven miles from Naples.

“December 27— sailed, leaving Sir Walter much improved in health and family at Naples...”¹⁷⁷

The trip would be Sir Walter Scott’s last. Sir Walter had written the bulk of his final work, the historical novel *The Siege of Malta*, while on board *Barham*,

completing it after the journey in the final months of his life, but it wouldn't be published until 2008—175 years after his death. It was a work his biographer described as “mostly...incredibly chaotic. It does indicate a very wonderful mind, completely buggered up by explosions in the head.”¹⁷⁸ Sir Walter was debt-ridden at the end of his life, and he persevered through his illness to finish the work, hoping that its publication would look after those debts. While it didn't, sales of his other works would more than pay for his residual obligations.

On February 10, Thomas is still in the Naples area. He writes a stirring account of an incident in a graveyard on February 6:

“On going into a church, I saw an old man, who appeared to be the grave-digger, with his lad fitting a coffin to the grave. The grave, which was about three feet and half in depth, was too short, and after trying various ways in vain to get in the coffin, not being willing I suppose to move any more of the pavement, they procured an old saw and began cutting and tearing away one end of the coffin making the first piece they got off serve as a hammer. After sawing and hammering and hammering and sawing for some time, shaking the coffin almost to pieces, one of them went for a more skillful sawyer who succeeded at last in shortening the coffin two or three inches, which contained the corpse of a man, one of whose feet was quite exposed. The other foot was wrapped up in a piece of white cloth, stained through with blood. Probably the poor creature had met with some accident which caused his death.

“After putting back some carpenter's shavings that had fallen out, and without fastening on the board, which indeed was broken to pieces at the end, they succeeded in forcing the coffin into the grave, and then with a kind of hoe and an old hand basket, for shovel they had none, commenced drawing the relics of humanity, among which was no lack of skulls, earth etc. into the last depository prepared for the dead.

“The mode, to me, was so novel, and in a catholick [sic] church, that I looked on with the greatest attention, for, I suppose, a quarter of an hour.”¹⁷⁹

178 *The Siege of Malta*. Wikipedia.org. Found 1/22/2021 at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Siege_of_Malta_\(novel\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Siege_of_Malta_(novel)).
179 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. February 10, 1832.

Chapter 8

Illness & Remedies

WHEN THOMAS WENT TO FIT OUT *BARHAM* at Spithead in October 1830, he left at home his thirty-two-year-old wife with six children—Mary (13), Joseph (11), John (9), Tom (7), Benjamin (2) and baby Elizabeth. He appeared to have trouble leaving after his five-year stint at home; he writes poetically of being parted again from Elizabeth and the children:

“I have been ashore at Portsmouth. The place seemed gay and business rather brisk...but one object was wanting which to me is almost everything, and that was your company, without which every place seems dismal...

“For my part I think I am more dull now than I was when I left you to go the coast of Africa, although I have some consolation in the hope that if I remain embarked for three years I shall then have done with the sea service and never, never more to part from you my love.

“But I am far from being free from anxiety on account of your tender state of health. May the Almighty preserve your health for me and for our children’s happiness, for without you the world will be to me but a wilderness and with you every place will be a Heaven.”¹⁸⁰

Soon it is apparent that he has left behind an ongoing saga of various illnesses and ailments that rival those at sea. In October, he writes:

180 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. June 14, 1831.

“I am extremely sorry to find that you have so much sickness at home, but as it is the Almighty’s will, I hope he will teach you patience to bear afflictions, and to consider that although your afflictions seem heavy, yet that they are light in comparison to those of a large portion of human beings. In the midst of sickness, you have the best medicine and advice, free of all expense, and almost of trouble. Neither can you be said to be quite in the midst of strangers, without a friend to help you. You have a tolerable income coming regularly, without having to go far for it. In the midst of various disturbances about the country, you are safe from molestation, with almost every reasonable comfort about you. You only require patience and resignation...”¹⁸¹

The house at Woolwich has a garden, stable, library, pigeons, and a corn mill... even a pig is contemplated at one time. John breeds canaries, Tom and Ben keep rabbits, and there is a cat. Every morning John and Thomas grind corn for the day in their mill. They fish in the canal. Mary is now old enough to help with the younger siblings, helping to carry some of the load for her mother. Ben is “usefully employed” in the garden.¹⁸² Throughout their lives, we see how the importance of gardening as a tool for good health is advocated by Thomas Sr.:

“Benjamin I suppose makes good use of the garden, I have no doubt he is very industrious, it will do him no hurt, now and then, I dare say, he dirt[sic] his clothes and shoes, but those are easier cleaned than he is nursed when he is sick, and you can always get some one or other to wash up a few things, and I do not mind Thomas digging the garden if he will not neglect his books...”¹⁸³

“I hope our children will make good use of their garden plots which you have so kindly and properly granted them; a knowledge in gardening is a most interesting and valuable acquirement it is highly conducive to health, it invigorates the mind strengthens the body and enlivens the spirits, it is also a profitable employment...”¹⁸⁴

181 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. October 17, 1831.

182 *The Waters Family, Volume IV*. Turvey, Sheila. P.15.

183 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. August 24, 1831.

184 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters June 8, 1832.

Woolwich is not a healthy place; the children continue to have “much sickness” and most develop lumps on their necks at one time or another.

“It is very extraordinary that our children are so afflicted with swellings in their throats, I cannot account for it, unless the complaint is epidemick [sic] in Woolwich; one would think there is some poisonous matter in the water, do the cockroaches get into the jug in the pantry, it might be covered by a kind of catgut, or does any unwholesome metallick [sic] substance come in contact with the victuals? I hope the bread is not bad; one would be almost afraid that the disease is infectious but I hope it is not.”¹⁸⁵

A decade later, Benjamin and possibly Mary would still be suffering from this condition:

“...The lump in Benjamin’s neck is a serious concern no doubt, but I do not think it a dangerous matter, in your hands where it will not be tampered with and the child so young, and Mary’s the same I am not alarmed about it if you will not be, see how nicely Thomas got round from his dangerous symptom when a little child...”¹⁸⁶

Over the years we hear brief mentions of Thomas Sr. also being unwell—in 1824 he had a cold and nosebleeds. Years later, he will mention a “liver complaint.” He even reported being seasick once during poor, foggy and dark conditions with rough water churning in the English Channel:

“I have been seasick. Hindle stands it extremely well, this day has been rough...My Cabin is so dark, even in the middle of the day, that I can scarcely see to write without a candle. I have a violent cold in my head, accompanied with a bleeding at the nose. I understand the bleeding is favorable as it keeps off the headache.”¹⁸⁷

However, while on *Barham*, he seems in good health—stark in comparison to his family at the time. He describes his revised nutritional habits that he believes account for it:

“For myself, my health is pretty fair, now, but I find it adviseable [sic] to be cautious in my diet; eating animal food but once a day and then

185 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. Oct 21, 1831.

186 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. June 24, 1840.

187 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. March 25, 1824.

rather sparingly than otherwise, butter I have not taken these many a year, Wine and spirits I have given up, my beverage is water, and tea, both of which I use but moderately; I was for a long time in an indifferent state of health, until I adopted my present mode of living; much liquids I think weakening, unless for strong people, who may eat a quantity of solid food to counterbalance, nourishing soups, gruels, and such sort, I think good for weakly stomachs, at any rate, to those who like them, they are very comforting, where the digestion is not good I am inclined to think, that the less food in reason, the better until health is restored, and then appetite and strength will follow; of animal meals, mutton is thought to be the most easy to digest where the stomach has no dislike to it; cheese and hard boiled eggs are said to be very bad except where there is no lack of strength; fruits, rather of the acid kind I believe, eaten moderately I believe very beneficial most particularly to scorbutick [sic]¹⁸⁸ habits.”¹⁸⁹

Thomas’ remedies

A number of household remedies for numerous ailments are advised by Thomas to Elizabeth over the years for all their illnesses and conditions. Some of these seem logical, others a bit strange based on the medical knowledge we have today.

And not only are the children often ill, but Elizabeth’s health has suffered.

She has now been more or less constantly breast-feeding babies for two years, and off and on every few years before that. She is ready to wean ten-month-old Elizabeth (“Betsey”), and Thomas agrees with her plan:

“I think you are right in weaning Betsey, I hope you will be able to do it without much difficulty. Mrs. Wilson commenced weaning her child last Sunday...”¹⁹⁰

Because breastfeeding could continue well past children’s teething, Elizabeth must have been bitten numerous times. She might also have gotten a toxic infection. As Victorian babies were nursed commonly for easily up to a year, the pains of their teething on their mother were often assuaged with a nipple

188 According to dictionary.com, “scorbutic” means “of, relating to, resembling, or affected by scurvy.”

189 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. March 25, 1833.

190 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. June 17, 1831.



Lead and glass nipple shields. 1851-1900. Unknown to women at the time, the lead was toxic. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

shield to be applied over the breast either during or after feeding. Usually, they were made of lead (terribly toxic), glass or rubber.¹⁹¹ It's not likely that women of that time would have known this. Nipple shields also prevented nipples from flattening, contain leaking milk and help women who had trouble breastfeeding. Nipple shields of the Victorian period were never popular with mothers.¹⁹²

In the same October letter, Thomas suggests a remedy for Elizabeth:

“I certainly think you ought to have a blistering or a strengthening plaster applied [sic] to your breast, or something else that is likely to remedy the complaint that is of such a serious nature. Delays you ought to know are dangerous, recollect your poor children will be the sufferers from your neglect of your health.”¹⁹³

We also know she has eye troubles and rheumatoid arthritis, likely due to a great amount of sewing she does in less than adequate light conditions. The hand-sewing of shirts for Thomas, mending clothing and other needlework seems to have been a full-time job that required the assistance of a friend, Miss Molsworth.

Thomas' sister Mary had expressed her advice two years prior for Elizabeth's eye condition, writing, "...has Mrs. W. tried the warm brandy & water for her

191 *The Curious Perks of Victorian Motherhood*. MessyMessyChic.com. Found 8/21/20 at <https://www.messynessychic.com/2019/07/12/the-curious-perks-of-victorian-motherhood/>.

192 Image description. Glass nipple shield, 1851-1900. Found 7/10/22 at commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Glass_nipple_shield,_1851-1900_Wellcome_L0065101.jpg.

193 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. October 17, 1830.

eyes?”¹⁹⁴ We’re not certain if she means that Elizabeth should drink the brandy or apply it to her eyes—hopefully the former.

The eye trouble and arthritis must be chronic conditions, as Thomas is still commenting on them two years later: “Do not sit so much at needlework, put some of it out. Do not be penny wise; you should avoid stooping, as much as possible, when you are sitting...”¹⁹⁵

Longevity in Victorian England

As we see in many of Thomas’ letters, illness and avoiding it is a major topic of daily discussion in Victorian England. Vaccines were just being developed and many of the illnesses that we have treatments or cures for today were disabling or fatal in the 1800s. We know that Thomas was preoccupied with healthy living for himself and his family, and voices numerous opinions on the subject over the years to his family.¹⁹⁶

Despite that, Elizabeth and Thomas both enjoy unusually long lives, in fact, outliving five of their children and all of Elizabeth’s siblings. Though many children died before they started school, for those who survived through infancy, the average life span was closer to sixty:

“For example, in 1850 in England and Wales life expectancy at birth was 42, but over 25% percent of children died before the age of five. For those who survived, life expectancy rose to 57.”¹⁹⁷

Still Thomas even beats those odds, becoming one of the rare 10 percent of the population to reach age eighty or beyond.¹⁹⁸

Thomas gives examples of this issue at length regarding their own family and children, including their firstborn, Jane:

“With respect to our children, I do not think that their constitutions are sufficiently robust to stand high diet; in your own family I think you can bear testimony, to the ill effects of living luxuriously, or at least, that good

194 Letter. Mary Totness to Thomas Waters Sr. May 7, 1828.

195 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. October 17, 1830.

196 *Thomas on Illness & Health*. Mywatersfamily.com.

197 *Misunderstanding Life Expectancy*. Reid, Mary. *The Guardian* online. August 18, 2019. Found 1/14/22 at <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/aug/18/misunderstanding-life-expectancy>.

198 *ibid*.

living does not ensure long life, nor secure health; your father and mother passed away almost in the days of their youth but not without enduring much previous sickness, and who lived better than they? For little Prudence I am sure nothing was wanting; Nancy, Edmund, Jane, Alice [Elizabeth's siblings], all, no doubt, had everything that could have been thought of for their health or comfort, and yet they are gone like untimely fruit.

"Benjamin [Elizabeth's brother] has never been healthy notwithstanding the pains that have been taken to make him strong; you, no doubt, were nursed with all the tenderness of a fond mother's care, I suppose nothing was wanting that could contribute to your wellbeing and yet, I believe, your health and strength during your tender years was anything but good. Since that you have fared plainer and your health has been nothing the worse...

"...our firstborn, Jane, also, we may be assured wanted for nothing that could tend in any way to her nourishment and yet what a state, we were told, she was in at twenty-two months of age when her existence terminated. Whereas the food of our children, whom we have been bringing up under our roof with all requisite care, has been of the simplest kind—plain bread, potatoes and other garden vegetables, rice, peas, oatmeal, fruit..., their drink skim milk or water.

"Nothing superfluous, nothing wanting; their clothing as plain as their diet and equally adapted for health...a few drugs of small expense from the Chemist was all that was required in the medicinal way during the seven or eight years that we were on half-pay. It appears to me that you are strongly advised to give the Children food of a more nutritious quality, and I am as strongly of opinion that you had better continue to them that plain kind of food which I have invariably recommended particularly as you say, "ours is not a sickly family," an evidence that a change in diet is needless.

"Perhaps you will not think it quite foreign to the subject if I mention that Mr. Wm. Sillifant¹⁹⁹, an Uncle and the immediate predecessor at Coombe of Mr. Sillifant, had seven children, one only of which just lived to the age of twelve. The parents were fine healthy people, possessing handsome property, and they lived to a good old age. They spared no expense to preserve their children and yet they could not save one."²⁰⁰

199 This "Wm. Sillifant" is the man we now believe to be Thomas' father and thus he is likely speaking of his half-siblings.
200 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. December 2, 1832.

In 1829, the year before Thomas leaves, baby Benjamin becomes ill with mitigated smallpox, but thankfully survives. Mitigated smallpox is a milder form of the disease and is likely why he recovers. Ben is quiet and gentle, often ill—he is described by his father as “the only one with a poor appetite,” and he remains a “rather weakly child.”²⁰¹

Mary is a big help

In 1830 at age thirteen, Mary has just become the household’s first teenager and, as the eldest child, she has long become accustomed to helping her mother look after her siblings, which her father encourages:

“I hope Mary suffers less in her head; I am anxious that she should make household affairs her study, after she has left school, and by her virtuous conduct prove a comfort to us, and an honour to her family.”²⁰²

Two years later, she has grown even more helpful to her mother, which pleases her father:

“It gives me very great comfort to learn from you that Mary is so useful, that she is desirous to help you as much as she can and that she begins to have a knowledge in cookery...

“Mary, I trust in Providence, will be strong and able to afford you much more assistance than now...”²⁰³

By her father’s remarks, Mary appears to suffer from frequent headaches and dizziness, perhaps migraine, and he is also concerned about both Elizabeth and her daughter’s postures:

“...you should avoid stooping, as much as possible, when you are sitting; Mary stoops a great deal when she is walking or sitting, she ought not to, it is bad for both of you.”²⁰⁴

Mary is becoming helpful to her mother in raising the younger children: “I am glad to find by your letter that Mary makes herself so useful, I hope she will be a good girl.”²⁰⁵

201 *The Waters Family. Volume IV.* Turvey, Sheila. P. 15.

202 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. October 17, 1830.

203 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. July 16, 1832.

204 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. October 17, 1830.

205 *ibid.*

In the fall of 1831, Mary sends her father a portfolio of presumably her schoolwork or drawings:

“Mary’s Portfolio I shall send back, as I cannot take that care of it, aboard ship, that it requires, it is very neat, I would rather have had a small drawing of hers.”²⁰⁶

But in one of the rare letters we have from Elizabeth a week later, Mary apparently has gone sour on school: “I shall be truly [sic] glad when Mary has left School she does not like it near so well as she did I suppose it is her long lessons.”²⁰⁷

Mary is encouraged by her father in her drawing, though we discover it may be motivated by giving her a useful skill for clothes-making rather than because she has a love for it:

“Mary’s drawing master ought now to begin to teach her to draw sprigs and flowers as it may be useful to her to copy patterns, our first motive for her learning to draw, You had better write a note to Miss Rideout on the subject.”²⁰⁸

There is still concern about Mary’s headaches as well as other health issues: “You had better request Miss Rideout not to give Mary long lessons, as it gives her the headache, I am afraid the child does not keep her bowels regular.”²⁰⁹

In 1832, when Mary is fifteen, she apparently has come to like drawing too much, and her father wishes her to focus more on becoming a good household manager, no doubt in planning for the day when she will marry:

“I can easily imagine that the giddiness which Mary at times suffers in her head is brought on by too close application to drawing, together with a leaning forward too long at a time on her breast; I advise her by all means not to study drawing so intensively but to make it a secondary consideration very well to amuse herself with now and then to sketch a pattern or anything from nature that particularly strikes her fancy; house-keeping has great claims on her attention, the economy of a house is of the first rate consequence, I do not know any science that can be more useful, more respectable nor, I think, more interesting for a female than

206 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. September 3, 1831.

207 Letter. Elizabeth Waters to Thomas Waters Sr. September 12, 1831.

208 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. October 12, 1831.

209 *ibid.*

good management in house-keeping; the great art, it appears to me, is to have every reasonable comfort together with an appearance suiting our station in life, at the least expense, within our income; when I say, within, of course I mean that we should, endeavour anually [sic] to save something; my opinion is that a person's fortune cannot long be at a standstill, it must be either rising or falling, therefore, we ought to endeavor to better our situation in life, by fair and honest means; I am glad my dear girl has made such a sensible beginning in housekeeping as to take charge of the expense-book, I should like for her to keep a journal and a receipt-book, no doubt she will feel it irksome at first, but she can do it by degrees, and in time she will reap the benefit by the knowledge she will have gained, and I trust that under her good mother's fostering hand, she will in proper time be a judicious woman and that the Almighty will prosper her.²¹⁰

Elizabeth has trouble coping

Their father's perspective is equal parts discipline and compassion, though this is indirectly delivered from out at sea, where he doesn't face the daily issues that Elizabeth does.

In addition to what today's stay-at-home mums are challenged with, Elizabeth also must contend with protecting herself and her children from a variety of mostly untreatable plagues, and, especially in the early days, with living conditions likely not much superior to Thomas' floating home.

Elizabeth must scrape together scant amounts of money and must rely on her absent husband's direction to their banker before she is allowed to take funds from their savings account. Communications are slow and sometimes unclear, providing lengthy delays for Elizabeth to acquire needed funds for rent, food, schooling, medicines and other essentials.

With their father away for years at a time, the children become "tinged with discontent"²¹¹ and are a handful for Elizabeth. By late summer of 1831, Elizabeth is struggling to keep up. The children are cross with each other, Elizabeth herself is unwell and having a devil of a time finding suitable help. It sounds like Elizabeth is at her wit's end and Thomas tries to comfort her, but as is often the case, seems to be gently scolding her at the same time:

210 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. September 3, 1832.

211 *ibid.*

“You say you are truly tired of the children, as your days and nights are taken up in attending to them but think to yourself if you would be so happy without them. I am sure you would not. I think an indolent life is a most intolerable one, and what would you have to do if you had not to attend to your children?”

“It is after troubles that we really enjoy happiness. Some people are mere nonentities possessed of no useful quality, all liberty, liberty. Who would be plagued with them? Now when I return to my home, I have the society of an interesting, engaging, useful, lovely Wife on whom my heart dotes.

“Even now I enjoy her sweet society through her charming complaining letters. My darling love lodges her complaints in the right place, her husband’s bosom. Continue to complain to me my dearest angel, and I will continue my endeavours to comfort you...”²¹²

Perhaps overarching all these physical ailments is Elizabeth’s depression, which Thomas is all too aware of:

“I hope your health is by this time pretty well renovated and that your spirits have recovered their proper tone; I assure you I am deeply afflicted whenever your mind is oppressed with sadness; ill health is difficult at any time to endure with firmness, how much more so when surrounded with sickness, and remote from that assistance and consolation which is deemed so essential to happiness, but I sincerely hope and trust that brighter days are yet to come and that you will live to enjoy the fruits of a good heart and virtuous intentions, amidst those blessings which the world cannot take away.”²¹³

Laughter a good medicine

But a sense of humour helps, and Elizabeth employs it liberally in writing about her baby namesake:

“You will my love be delighted with Elizabeth she is very engaging her tongue is going at a fine rate. Yesterday just after dinner and my head was

212 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. August 30, 1831.

213 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. July 16, 1832.

aching at the time and I said sharply do let us have a little peace she very quietly said No. I don't want peace, I want to be Dashed. She is very fond of Miss Bealey's powders and will often say, Me very sick, why don't you give me a little of Miss B powders, hey why don't you Ma, which she will keep repeating untill [sic] she is attended to, then and then only we shall have a little ease. She is very fond of Benjiman [sic] and he is kind to her they prattle to each other. It often amuses me he will sometimes give her a slap when very teasing [sic]. I cannot think what she will think of you when you come home altho she very often speaks about her Papa. Benjiman [sic] will say it is his Papa, then Elizabeth will say no it is not it is my Papa. That he will not allow her to repeat without being angry."²¹⁴

The delightful child must be a source of light to her mother in difficult times, as Thomas notes: "Betsey from your description is a most engaging child, her playful innocent ways must be very soothing to her mother."²¹⁵

As life in Woolwich moves on, a major event that will also help lighten the entire country's mood is coming in the fall of 1831.

Royalty illuminates England

There is a special event in the autumn that lightens Elizabeth's heart somewhat. It is the "illumination"—a special London-wide celebration on the night of September 8, 1831, celebrating the coronation that day of the new king and queen following the death of George IV.

The coronation of King William IV and Queen Adelaide took place more than fourteen months after William succeeded to the throne at the age of sixty-four.²¹⁶

William doesn't believe in lavish expenditure on coronations (his brother and predecessor George IV had the most expensive one in history). William is also keenly aware of the state of the nation: the coronation is to be held on the eve of the passage of the Reform Act,²¹⁷ which all the previous riots in Manchester,

214 Letter. Elizabeth Waters to Thomas Waters Sr. Sept 30, 1833.

215 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. July 16, 1832.

216 *Coronation of William IV and Adelaide*. Wikipedia.org. Found 10/21/20 at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coronation_of_William_IV_and_Adelaide#:~:text=The%20coronation%20of%20King%20William,person%20to%20assume%20the%20monarchy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coronation_of_William_IV_and_Adelaide#:~:text=The%20coronation%20of%20King%20William,person%20to%20assume%20the%20monarchy.). William is the oldest person to assume the monarchy.

217 *Coronation: A History of Kingship and the British Monarchy*. Found in e-book at location 5224.

Bristol and elsewhere have been protesting. The country is financially exhausted and politically charged.

Still, tight-budgeted as it is, the coronation is a bright moment in an otherwise dismal time in England. William IV's coronation establishes much of what remains today the pageantry of the event, which had previously involved peerage-only ceremonies in Westminster Hall before a procession on foot across the road to the Abbey.²¹⁸

After the Thursday coronation, the new monarch travels in procession in the Gold State Coach—the first time it is used at a coronation—to and from Westminster Abbey, starting a tradition which has been followed in all subsequent coronations. No real consideration is given to the matter of public entertainment and people must make do with the two processions between St James's and the Abbey. Along the parade route lined by foot guards, temporary stands for spectators have been built. The return procession leaves the abbey at 3:30 p.m. That evening, the “New Avenue,” now known as The Mall, is illuminated by gas lamps and is opened to the public for the first time.²¹⁹

Throughout London, people do the same in their own neighborhoods.

Elizabeth describes preparing for, celebrating, and cleaning up after the illumination which seems to have been exciting, except for one small incident:

“Sept 7—There is great preparations here for the illumination which is expected tomorrow night.

“Sept 8—this has been a...busy day. Mrs. Mols and Myself bought Spermaceti²²⁰ Candles...10 o'Clock—I am now sitting in my best room with eight candles burning in my Window, all the Children asleep except Mary.

“About eight I took Mary, Joseph and Miss Molsworth a little way to see the different Devices down Rectory Place and as far as Mrs. Nicholls [sic]. She had variegated lamps forming R. IV.

218 *Coronation of William IV and Adelaide*. Found 8/4/20 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coronation_of_William_IV_and_Adelaide.

219 *A Brief History of Outdoor Lighting Through the 19th Century*. Resort Lighting Inc. Found on 08/12/20 at <https://resortlightinginc.com/history-of-lighting/brief-history-of-outdoor-lighting-through-the-19th-century/>. The Mall is the first street in Europe to have gas lamps in 1813.

220 Spermaceti, a wax, liquid at body temperature, obtained from the head of a sperm whale or bottlenose whale. It was used chiefly in ointments, cosmetic creams, fine wax candles, pomades, and textile finishing and later for industrial lubricants. The substance was named in the mistaken belief that it was the coagulated semen of the whale. For more, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/spermaceti>.

“Over the Bank there was a W.A. and the Crown. At Mr. Stansfield’s there was a W. A Crown and an Anchor.²²¹ Just as we got home there was a Squib thrown which fell on Mary’s Bonnet and burnt it a little. That was the only Misfortune that happened to us...

“Sept 9—This Morning we are all busy cleaning after the illumination though we did not have so much Mess as I expected...”²²²

For Brits like Elizabeth and her friends whose communities face unrest, disease and economic uncertainty, it is a glorious and grand celebration, perhaps presenting hope for new and better times.

Elizabeth has one additional event to look forward to, this one courtesy of an invitation from their friend and landlord Captain Molsworth—to visit the famous Tower of London:

“Capt. Molsworth has given me an invitation to visit the Tower in November or October he will be able to show us the Wild Beasts²²³ and all the jewels there [sic] Majesties wore Coronation Day and other things worthy of note and he said any of my Friends might go with me. I should like to take all the Children.”²²⁴

221 King William had served in the Royal Navy.

222 Letter. Elizabeth Waters to Thomas Waters Sr. September 12, 1831.

223 For several centuries there was a zoo in the Tower, started by King Henry III, who received a gift of three lions in 1235 from Emperor Frederick II. At its height there were more than 300 wild animals kept in the Tower, but concerns for animal welfare, the nuisance factor and the expense finally led to its closure in 1835, just four years after Elizabeth was invited to visit there by Captain Molsworth. For more: <https://www.hrp.org.uk/tower-of-london/history-and-stories/the-tower-of-london-menagerie/#gs.q24akg>.

224 *ibid.*

Chapter 9

Barham Completes Tour in Royal Fashion

AFTER PARTING WITH SIR WALTER AT NAPLES, *Barham* continues its tour of the Mediterranean, where Thomas has another celebrity encounter in 1832, this time with the thirtieth sultan of the vast and powerful Ottoman Empire.

Sultan Mahmud II is forty-seven years old. He is known as the Reformer and the Warrior. He was born in 1785 in Topikapi Palace, and his father had been the twenty-seventh sultan. Mahmud narrowly missed being executed by his half-brother Mustafa in 1808 at twenty-three years of age and assumed the throne a year later at age twenty-four.

Mahmud's reign was characterized by showing major interest in Westernization; institutions, palace order, daily life, clothing, music and many other areas saw radical reform as the Ottoman Empire opened up to modernization. As were his predecessors, Mahmud wasn't averse to killing relatives; he has his half-brother and predecessor Mustafa IV executed four months into his reign.²²⁵

Thomas writes from the Bay of Bosphorus beside which the great city of Constantinople now (Istanbul) Turkey sits. He describes the rare close and ceremonial sighting of the Sultan on May 29:

225 *Mahmud II*. Wikipedia.org. Found 11/09/20 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahmud_II. It had been a half-century since any Sultan would rule as long as Mahmud II—he would reign for more than thirty years, until his death on July 1, 1839, at age fifty-four.



Mahmud II, Sultan of the Ottoman Empire. Painting by Henry Guillaume Schlesinger now at the Musée de Versailles was made in 1839, just seven years after Thomas Sr. saw him in Constantinople. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

“The Sultan, after passing the day at his palace near Therapia,²²⁶ did the *Barham* the high honour of making a circuit round her, about sunset, in his boat. He came very near, but not on board, it being contrary to his dignity, it is said, to visit a foreigner or even to pay any compliment.

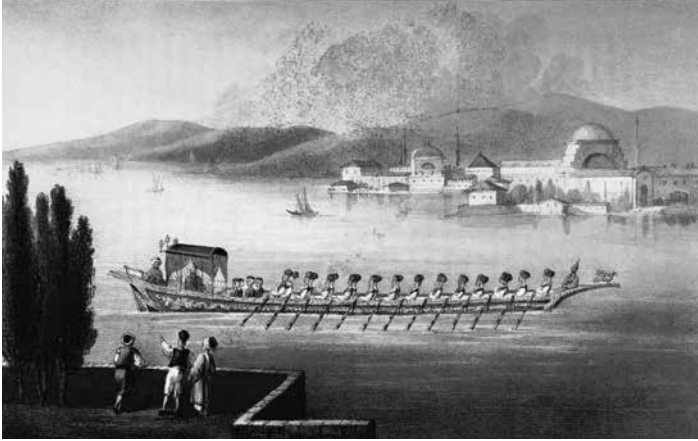
“Therefore, what he did was considered an extraordinary act of civility. He held a pink umbrella over his head and was seated at the bottom of his boat, Turkish fashion. He was preceded by two boats which were close alongside each other and contained a band of musicians softly playing his grand march. The band’s playing or not playing was regulated by a twirl or two of the umbrella.

“When he came near, he was complimented with three hearty cheers from the Ship’s company, our band striking up his march, and a royal salute of twenty-one guns as he moved off for Stambool²²⁷ (the Turkish name for Constantinople). We were visited about four or five days after by “*His Highness*” chief Physician who gave us to understand that his master was highly gratified with the greeting which he had received...”²²⁸

226 A neighborhood of Istanbul. For more: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tarabya>.

227 Thomas is referring to “Istanbul,” which he may have spelled phonetically as he heard the Turks speaking it.

228 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. July 16, 1832.



The Sultan's Imperial Caique from a painting by Charles MacFarlane, from 1828. It is likely the same one that bears the Sultan close to Barham in 1832. British Library. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

Thomas describes Istanbul and its people:

"...This is a fine country, but its cultivation is very much neglected. It has been most tyrannically governed, and the Sultan's subjects have been afraid to make themselves rich for fear he should take their lives for the sake of obtaining their wealth. I understand their lives and property are rather more secure under the present grand Signior, and that there is a material change in the manners of the Turks for the better.

"Their houses are flimsy, nearly all built of wood. The inhabitants are friendly, in appearance to us. They take but little exercise; their chief amusement as far as we can perceive is smoking and drinking Coffee or Sherbet. They condescend from curiosity to come on board to view the Ship.

"The females are seldom seen, that is to say the most respectable of them, and the others, when they venture out, are so muffled that nothing is to be seen of them but their noses and eyes. This mode of living is confined to the Turkish, or at most to those who possess the Mahometan religion, for the Armenian, Greeks etc. are not so restricted.

"The Turks eat but little animal food, pork they abhor, (instructed so by their religion,) and some other species of animal food. They follow the primitive mode of feeding themselves—squatting round a circular dish or bowl containing their food ready cut and mixed. Each with his thumb

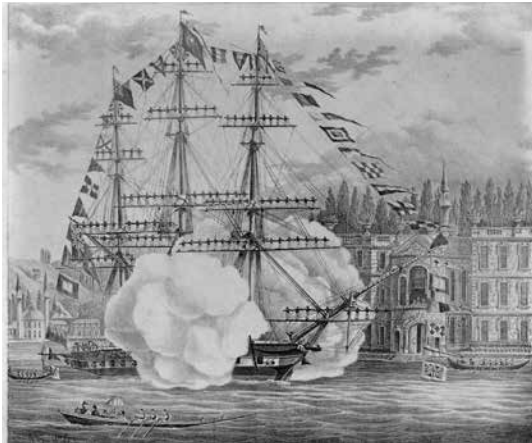
and three forefingers dip in and eat until his appetite is satisfied, without the aid of knife fork or spoon.

“But it is said that the Turks are getting a little more refined and that some among the upper ranks are beginning to use those convenient utensils at their repasts. They are averse to taking refreshment with Christians, (excepting a little bread, or a little Wine or spirits under the name of sherbet,) but this prejudice they are said to be slowly overcoming.

“Tis thought they are not now quite disinclined to learn from enlightened Nations but that they are ashamed to be taught by them. Pride and indigence allied to indolence is their inheritance...”²²⁹

In August 1832, after two months in the Bay of Bosphorus, *Barham* sets sail with another celebrity joining Sir Walter Scott—Sir Stratford Canning, the British Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire.²³⁰ With all due pomp and circumstance, *Barham* fires a ceremonial salute, banners flying, in honor of the Sultan, with the crew filling the yards and pennants flying from bow to stern.

C. C. de Brocktorff, the artist who witnessed the event and drew it on stone to be later made into the lithograph below, describes it this way: “*H.M.S. Barham*



Barham saluting the Sultan in the Bay of Bosphorus near Topikapi Palace in 1832. Brocktorff. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

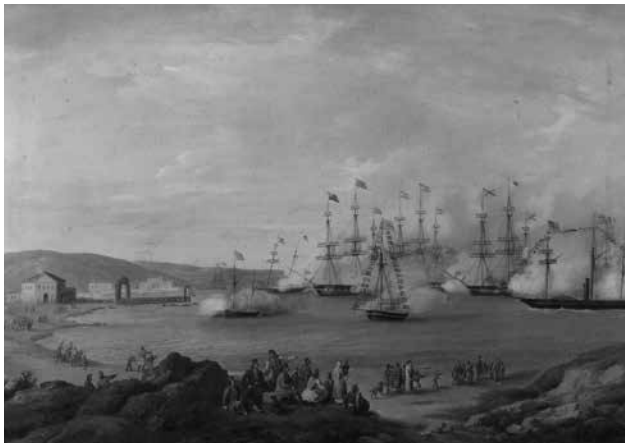
²²⁹ *ibid.*

²³⁰ *H.M.S. Barham in a Squall on the 26th Oct 1833*. Sketch Description. Found 10/11/21 at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:HMS_Barham_\(ship,_1811\)#/media/File:H.M.S._Barham_in_a_Squall_on_the_26th_Octr_1833_at_10h_40m._Am_RMG_PY0784.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:HMS_Barham_(ship,_1811)#/media/File:H.M.S._Barham_in_a_Squall_on_the_26th_Octr_1833_at_10h_40m._Am_RMG_PY0784.jpg).

passing the Sultan's Palace on quitting the Bosphorus 2 August 1832. Time of shortening & furling all plain sail manning yards & dressing Ship 2 1/2 Minutes.”²³¹

Thomas encounters one more royal, at the end of January 1833. On January 30, Otho,²³² the young Bavarian prince who would within days become King of Greece, arrives on *HMS Madagascar* to take possession of his Dominions:

“The next day the Officers of the French, Russian, and English Squadron had the honour of being presented to His Majesty, on board the Frigate, by their respective Flag Officers—6th Feb. The King landed in state, and was received with enthusiastic greeting; His Majesty will be eighteen next June; he is tall, for his age, his figure is good, and his mien elegant and dignified; his face is full with a rather large mouth; his countenance, although not handsome, is exceedingly agreeable; the Greeks are delighted with him, but His Majesty not being of age to govern his Kingdom, that duty devolves on a Regency...”²³³



The international squadron carrying Prince Otto of Bavaria to become King of Greece firing a salute off Nafplio, February 1833. In addition to the thousands who thronged to meet him on shore, ships from numerous countries gathered in the bay, including *Barham*. Artist presumed to be a son of Anton Schranz. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

231 Artist description. De Brocktorff, C.C. Found 11/11/21 at https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b7/H.M.S._Barham_passing_the_Sultans_Palace_on_quitting_the_Bosphorus_2_August_1832_Time_of_shortening_and_furling_all_plain_sail_manning_yards_and_dressing_Ship_2_1-2_Minutes._RMG_PY0781.jpg.

232 Alternatively spelled "Otto."

233 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. March 5, 1833.

After another two years of touring the Mediterranean, including several stops in Italy (where they have brought the British Ambassador to Constantinople), Malta, and Spain, Thomas finally returns home for two years before his final voyage. Numerous letters give colorful descriptions of his final stops.

On April 20, at the end of *Barham's* voyage in spring of 1834, Thomas describes the exotic ports of Majorca, Cartagena and Alicante:

“We sailed on a cruise the day after my last letter’s date. The first place we touched at was Port Mahon [a Royal Navy Dockyard Base], in the Island of Majorca. The Harbour is fine; the town is one of the cleanest we ever saw. The streets are wide and well paved. The houses neatly whitewashed inside and out and floors nicely bricked, but it is said the inhabitants are very poor.

“From thence we went to Cartagena, in Spain, a place once of great note when Spain was in its high day of glory, but now, sad change, in a half state of ruin and decay. It has a safe harbour, but it is without ships; a fine dockyard without stores, and good fortifications without the proper means of defence [sic].

“We next sailed to Alicante, a well-fortified town, best known for its considerable exportation of Barilla²³⁴; Alicante has a royal Manufactory Segars [cigars], employing about two thousand four hundred females, all of them in one very extensive apartment with Windows closed to prevent the tobacco from drying too fast in the course of its manufacture. The sale of Tobacco in Spain is a government monopoly, and nothing the better for that. We thence proceeded to Valencia...”²³⁵

While Thomas visits once-grand places now in decay, Elizabeth writes of the sorry state of maintenance at their own home:

“...our garden is in a sad state of desolation, neither weeds or wheat growing there. Perhaps it would not have been in that state had Mr. Dale repaired the fence sooner. Another thing—

“Necessary wants emptying. It is very dangerous. The foundation has given way and so has the woodwork. I am not so anxious to leave the house.

234 “Barilla” referred to soda ash containing sodium carbonate which was extracted from barilla plants. It was a significant export from several European countries. Sodium carbonate was valued for its many uses, including to make washing powders, glass, soap, paper and to soften water. For more: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sodium_carbonate and <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barilla>.

235 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. April 20, 1834.

The bottom kitchen I dislike living in sometimes. I am not in good spirits and that does not improve them..."²³⁶

On March 23, 1834, Thomas sails the final leg for England with Commander in Chief Vice-Admiral Sir Pulteney Malcolm, touching briefly at Gibraltar and finally coming to rest at Spithead on April 20 where he is "paid off." He returns to his family and a two-year recruitment mission at Woolwich headquarters.

It is none too soon for his wife...and his marriage. In April, with her husband's return now within days, Elizabeth pens her relief in her last letter to Thomas aboard *Barham*: "...how delightful it is to have you so near home with the happy prospect of soon being with [you]...this will be the last letter directed [to] *Barham*, ever Yours My Dearest Love..."²³⁷

Time to be home

By the time Thomas returns to England in the spring of 1834, tensions between the captain and his wife have been simmering for the previous nine months at least, as evidenced by several angry exchanges. In previous letters they are apparently fighting over a letter that Elizabeth says she sent to Thomas and which she accuses him of returning to her. Thomas responds in annoyance:

"I am astonished at your persisting in saying that I returned your letter, when I should have really supposed that you had sufficient good sense, and knowledge of me, to suppose such a circumstance would be most improbable, and I should say impossible..."²³⁸

In August, his upset with Elizabeth at how she so often misinterprets his meaning continues. They are clearly not in a good place:

"Your letter of the 3rd June I received 23rd July, and cannot help thinking you uncandid; in your vexation some months ago, you write a letter which you know will vex me, you forward it, and afterwards wonder I should be vexed; for me to point out any parts that displeased me would be ridiculous

236 Letter. Elizabeth Waters to Thomas Waters Sr. April 28, 1834.

237 *ibid.*

238 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. July 13, 1833.

and could answer no good purpose; it seems you applied some parts of one of my letters with which you were much displeased to yourself, now I must beg to say once for all that such parts were meant generally, and not intended to apply to you; at the same time if you could reap any useful hint from my observations, why, all Well...”²³⁹

And...

“You must think me a very frivolous being indeed, if you could suppose for a moment that I was displeased because you said in two or three of your letters that you were busily employed. I cannot imagine how such an idea could have occurred to you, notwithstanding your so often misapprehending some of the meanings in my letters; you may be assured that I am particularly interested in everything you can say about your domestic employments, which, in fact, is your Province...”²⁴⁰

Elizabeth responds in a September letter which first acknowledges their nineteenth wedding anniversary that month, saying, “This day My dearest Love belongs to you alone. 19 Years ago, I became yours,” and then goes on:

“I thank you for your letter, but not for thinking me uncandid. Certainly, I was very angry when I wrote the disputed letter. Surely it was natural for me to apply the contents of your letter to myself and I cannot help thinking the hints were all intended for me alone and no one else. I am sensible of my bad cooking also of my bad management and I have not looked upon them with indifference. Neither have I knowingly neglected to improve in those duties you so strongly recommend.

“You should not have discontinued your correspondence. I am almost sure you would not if it had been possible for you to feel the painful anxiety your long silence occasioned. It is now past and if you were here, I would seal the reconciliation, but it is only from my pen you can now receive it.”²⁴¹

We can only imagine that “seal the reconciliation” means some form of reuniting intimacy, which neither have had for years. And indeed, it must occur, because less than a month after Thomas returns in May of 1834, Elizabeth is

239 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. August 16, 1833.

240 *ibid.*

241 Letter. Elizabeth Waters to Thomas Waters Sr. Sept 30, 1833.

pregnant with their seventh surviving child, daughter Sarah, who is born on February 28, 1835. Elizabeth is now thirty-seven and Thomas is fifty-four.

Wanted: Spirited Young Men

At some point in 1836, the Waters family moves from 21 Mulgrave Place to Kent Street, still in Woolwich. In July, Thomas travels to Newark, about 130 miles from Woolwich, for a three-month recruiting mission. Apparently, recruitment was not very lucrative:

“I have had two recruits since I came here, but one, an Irishman, deserted, and the other, an Englishman, is becoming troublesome and threatens to desert. I have therefore sent him off, or rather am going to send him off tomorrow, for Head Qrs. to prevent, if possible, his putting his threats into execution.



ROYAL MARINES.

An opportunity now offers for
SPIRITED YOUNG MEN
To Enlist in that truly
LOYAL AND GALLANT CORPS.
IN WHICH GOOD CONDUCT IS
CERTAIN OF ITS REWARD ;
WHEN EMBARKED THEY HAVE
GREAT ADVANTAGES,

They may see almost every Foreign Nation in the World, and have excellent living at the same time, consisting of Beef, Plumb Pudding, and a Pint of Grog daily, or Wine in proportion.

A chance of PRIZE MONEY, besides having the great satisfaction of upholding their Country's Honor ; and on their return after about three years absence, they will be enabled to see their Friends with Pockets well lined, or to purchase their Discharge if they should not wish to remain in the service.

THE BOUNTY IS £3 17 6
GOD SAVE THE QUEEN.

As the number required will soon be filled up, an early application is recommended, to **SERJEANT** *Rendezvous*
at the

One of the “bills” or flyers Thomas used during a later recruiting mission, around 1840 in Birmingham.

“I do not expect to make my fortune by this service; my aim is to lose as little as I can by it. I have had a hundred bills printed which cost me 18/s and since that, the standard has been lowered an Inch and half. It has cost me 3/s more to have them altered, that is to say those that were not circulated.

“Then there is the expense of sticking the bills up in the different towns and large villages in my district. It cost me a shilling for sticking up a dozen or fourteen in this town. Then there is an occasional half-crown towards Music at fairs, and there are other occasional expenses, trifling in themselves, yet mounting to something considerable in the course of a year.

“These are expenses which I think an Officer employed on this service is called upon to bear. Some perhaps would say there is no need, but I think that those who are without zeal will neither benefit themselves or anyone else. For my part, if I can get recruits I will, although at a tolerable risk and with chance but of little profit. At the same time, I shall not neglect economy, as far as circumstances will admit, so necessary with small incomes, and not needless to a certain extent with large ones.”²⁴²

Even so, Thomas might have welcomed the escape from home—at this point, there are four teenagers in the house, the eldest: Mary (19), Joseph (17), John (15) and Thomas (13). The second batch is still young—Benjamin is eight and the precocious (and possibly left-handed) Elizabeth (“Betsey”) is six. Finally, the first of what will be their third group of children, Sarah, is a baby.

Getting an education

Though Thomas Sr. is chronically absent during the children’s childhoods in the 1830s, his letters show his love for them and provide insight into their behaviours, and their father’s expectations of them in their schooling. The children all attend small day schools in London. Their father’s prescription for boys’ education is thorough, without nonsense, and represented the typical education for a boy at that time: “A good hand at writing, well-versed in the common rules of arithmetic, tolerably skilled in Accounts, with a knowledge of French, twelve months’ drawing and six months’ dancing, will I think do pretty well.”²⁴³

242 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. August 21, 1836.

243 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. October 24, 1836.

Education is important to the children's father, and it reflects his own sad childhood experience:

"I am convinced it is nothing like leading children on in learning as early as possible, consistent with their health, but by no means to drive. Many and many a person has rued the neglect of their education in their early days merely from inattention from their Parents or guardians, not from want of means. I speak feelingly. I felt the oppression of appearing dull when the fault was not mine so much as it was the fault of others, and I in reality became dull from my spirits being borne down..."²⁴⁴

Elizabeth keeps her husband informed of the children's educational progress:

"Mary is not so frequently complaining of her head still she is not fit for studying she is looking very well Joseph will have a French Master this quarter his drawing Master is well pleased with his abilities. I shall be glad when you are at home to regulate his studies John is not so quick in learning but very studious and fond of his home. Thomas is very sharp and has a good memory."²⁴⁵

She also sends him letters that the children have written to him, as well as examples of their work, and he returns positive feedback:

"Mary spells well, and John's letter is pretty fair, Thomas' writing I can now read very well, his spelling he will improve in time and Joseph's writing is in an improved hand, I shall be glad when he mends his conduct, that I may bless him as I wish to bless all my children, Benjamin is a good boy, and I hope Betsey will be a good girl, I am glad Mary is so attentive, she will like sewing better as she gets older, John's memory will improve with time, Thomas having such a good memory, he ought to learn fast..."²⁴⁶

One child will struggle with his studies, but not from lack of interest so much as an apparent lack of ability. Ben may have had a learning disability that would not have been detected at that time. His father alludes to this and shows uncommon gentleness toward his son, suggesting how he should be treated by both his parents and teacher, Mr. Jeffery:

244 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. April 29, 1840.

245 Letter. Elizabeth Waters to Thomas Waters Sr. Sept 30, 1833.

246 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. April 27, 1834.

“...poor Benney does not readily comprehend what is taught him, and if he does comprehend, he has a bad memory and it is a long time before he can mind. I have no doubt he suffers from anxiety too, from a fear of not being up in time and of not being able to learn his lesson. There is no doubt he requires a deal of cherishing. I do not wish him to get up so early if he dislikes it. I think if you were to write to Mr. Jeffery, stating Benjamin’s occasional indisposition begging that he will excuse the child if he is sometimes late in the morning or not always able to do his lesson, say that he really studies hard at home and seems to be over-anxious from a fear that he should give displeasure.

“He is so very timid, a better child there need not be than he is. Perhaps by your writing or speaking to Mr. Jeffery it may relieve the child’s mind, for I think if he were less under fear he would learn better. The child may rest assured that I am very well satisfied indeed with him, and I have no doubt he will get on very well in time. Some learn quicker, some slower and sometimes those that learn slowest are the best in the end, for they make up in diligence what they wanted in quickness...”²⁴⁷

Tom is described as a “quick-witted and vigorous” child.²⁴⁸ He does well at his studies but doesn’t like them, preferring to putter in the garden. Though Thomas Sr. is upset when the children (mostly Tom) at times neglect their studies, he is equally concerned when Elizabeth reports to him that a tutor is harsh with the boys, and apparently applying corporal punishment that she describes as “beating” them. Thomas responds that if she feels they’re being treated too severely, she should find a different teacher for them.

However, when Tom isn’t behaving, he is quick to revert:

“As for Thomas, if he is such an idle naughty boy, caring little for his books, I do not know what will become of him unless he reforms he had better be sent to Mr. Dixon’s again.”²⁴⁹

Tom is quite clever at a young age, and apparently uses this trait to his advantage. In one story told much later to Geoff Hewson by his mother, Amy (Waters) Hewson, one day young Ben had some money. Tom persuaded Ben

247 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. October 6, 1842.

248 *ibid.*

249 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. August 8, 1832.

that if he put the money in the bank, it would grow larger, and told him to pretend that burying the money in the garden was the same as putting it in the bank. When Ben went into the house, Tom dug up the money and claimed it as his own.²⁵⁰

This sense of humor shown by Tom will be evident in many ways in his future letters home to his family. Aside from its humor, though, this story is meaningful in the way it illustrates the metaphor of growing a garden for increasing wealth—combining two important themes that will run through the Waters' family stories.

²⁵⁰ *Waters-Cairns Ancestral Compilation, 1870-2012*, p. 33.

Chapter 10

Joseph & the Opium Smuggler

AND AT LEAST ONE TEENAGER had been showing rebellious signs for a few years before his father returned home from the *Barham* voyage. Eldest son Joseph has been a handful for Elizabeth and is often a subject of discussion in letters between his parents as early as age twelve.

In a lengthy response to his wife asking his wishes for Joseph, Thomas delivers a veritable sermon on his expectations of not only his eldest boy, but all his children:

“You ask me to say what I would wish Joseph to be, I wish him to become an honest, diligent, discreet, and in every respect, worthy man, afraid of no one, or of anything but of doing a bad action; true and just in all his dealings I wish him to be; I recommend him to lose no time in his learning, while his Parents are able to pay for it, for upon that and his industry, with a good character under Providence, must he depend for a reputable livelihood, for interest with those in Power I have none, money I have but very very little.

“Life is uncertain and time precious, therefore, I recommend him to gain as much knowledge as he can from his Tutor while he is able; if I could choose for him it would be the commercial line but in that I have no influence. In short I advise him, of all things, to get rid of his evil habits

while he is able to make himself acquainted with real useful knowledge as fast as he can, so that he may have something to turn to account when an opportunity offers whether in that, or any other line. Much depends on his management of his time, if he wastes it in idle follies [sic], I should say there is little hope for him, but if he makes good use of it he is sure, by the Almighty's providence, to succeed at last and to become a most honourable member of society.

"I hope I need not remind him how requisite it is for him to be dutiful to his parents if he wishes for God's blessing; of all things, I warn him most strongly never to omit saying his prayers Night and morning and by no means to forget in them his sisters and brothers. Perhaps the greatest misfortune that befalls any family is when the individuals are at variance with each other, and the greatest blessing, when they are in amity, where each is always ready to render the others any useful service and ever anxious for the honour of the whole."²⁵¹

Joseph had been to the country for a week in the late summer of 1832 with a Mr. Williams, possibly a schoolmaster, where his father hoped he would behave.²⁵² We learn that while Joseph is "of short stature" he has a "naturally strong" constitution²⁵³ though he often suffers from a sore throat.

He wouldn't eat what his mother prepared for meals, rather, helped himself when his mother was "out of the way" to "what he knows would give you displeasure," Thomas writes.

"I am sorry to find that Joseph is again ill but whilst he continues a naughty boy he need not expect good health... he sets a bad example to the younger children and very likely eats what disagrees with him; What can he expect but sickness and blame..."²⁵⁴

The fall of 1833 seemed to show little improvement in Joseph's ways. Though we don't know what the incident was, we learn that his conduct was "base," and he had his father's "contempt for his gain."²⁵⁵ As a result, Thomas would not let his son learn dancing that winter... a punishment for whatever Joseph's egregious acts had been.

251 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. August 8, 1832.

252 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. September 8, 1832.

253 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. December 2, 1832.

254 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. December 26, 1832.

255 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. October 19, 1832.

In the spring of 1834, his father writes that “Joseph’s writing is in an improved hand,” but he is still misbehaving: “I shall be glad when he mends his conduct, that I may bless him as I wish to bless all my children.”²⁵⁶

Rebel becomes runaway

The situation had only become worse as the now seventeen-year-old Joseph runs away from home twice—in May and in June of 1836. Thomas receives a letter on the first occasion from a J.S. Thomson who writes hurriedly from the Portsmouth Marine Barracks:

“I write in great haste to say this moment your Son has called at my house. He asked me to write you to say he is well. He says he is going to enter on board a Man of War here. Come down for God’s sake and take him home as he is in great distress...”²⁵⁷

Joseph returns home, but soon again tries to go to sea in June. His parents seem unsure how to best handle their rebellious teenager. In this letter to Elizabeth after Joseph’s second runaway attempt, Thomas expresses a familiar parental frustration: he wants to support his son, but he also wants to set some boundaries:

“With respect to Joseph I am at a loss what to say, I would gladly furnish the money if I could but I know not how ... I would be glad for the boy to go as he wishes it, and you are anxious about it and natural enough, and I am also, hoping it possible he may yet be a credit to us if he would but give over lying.”²⁵⁸

It seems that Joseph is determined to go to sea. In August, he apprentices on board a ship smuggling opium into China from India, the brig *Antonia Pereira*.²⁵⁹ Elizabeth only has two days to fit him out.²⁶⁰

He writes his mother a brief farewell note which reads in part:

“I hope you; my dear Papa and all my brothers and sisters are well. Tell them I shall never, never forget them, and I hope that when I come home, they will see a mate of a vessel. I have not time to write Papa.”²⁶¹

256 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. April 27, 1834.

257 Letter. J.S. Thomson to Thomas Waters Sr. May 16, 1836.

258 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. July 21, 1836.

259 Also spelled *Antonio Perera*.

260 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. July 28, 1836.

261 Letter. Joseph Waters to his mother Elizabeth Waters. August 12, 1836.



An example of an “opium clipper,” called *Water Witch*. A British barque built in 1831. Joseph’s ship, *Antonio Pereira*, would have looked like this. Hill, Norman (artist); Peck, James (engraver). Royal Museums Greenwich. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

Thomas reacts to the sudden news, appearing to believe that his son may be finding his way back to good behaviour:

“Joseph poor boy! it is a new thing to him, I dare say at times he hardly knows what he is about, but I trust he is in a great measure reformed and that he will make a dutiful son to his mother and an affectionate brother to his brothers and sisters, it seems to me that he has a good stout heart, he showed a very natural feeling of tenderness on parting from you which I admire, and that he will have perseverance in the right way to get on, Please the Almighty to spare him his Health; tell him from me that he has my most hearty Blessing and I pray the Almighty to bless him and to make him a Man of Probity, honour and Truth and may you my Love live to see him what I wish him to be, and may his brothers and sisters always have the Almighty’s blessing on them, it is the richest endowment that can be possessed.”²⁶²

On August 15, as his ship embarks, Joseph again writes to his mother:

“I am just leaving sight of Old England, the place of my nativity, of all my treasures. I go with a good heart a resolute and a firm one...I have to do plenty of work: attend upon the men, the chief mate, trim the lamps, mount the rigging and sweep the decks... Pray don’t be angry with me for this writing. I have been hard at work and seasick all the day and it was nearly dark while I was writing it...”²⁶³

262 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. August 14, 1836.

263 Letter. Joseph Waters to Elizabeth Waters. August 15, 1836.

Elizabeth sends this letter to Thomas in Newark, who responds with emotion:

“I was very much affected with our Son’s letter, on his leaving sight of old England, even to tears. May the Almighty bless him and make him true and just in all his dealings. It was very considerate of him to write to his Mother at such a time and in his distressed state of seasickness. I begin to hope that his heart will be where it ought to be, in its right place. He seems to show a good and affectionate feeling, may it be real and lasting...”²⁶⁴

Several months later, Elizabeth has not had a letter from Joseph, and she consults her husband about whether she should write to her son. He replies:

“I do not see the utility of writing to Joseph, until you have a letter from him, you of course will be guided by your own feelings and write when and as often as you think proper, only I think it is not the same as between Husband and Wife where they may have much to communicate to each other and advice to ask; I have nothing to say to him but that he will attend to his duty, be just in all his dealings, say his prayers Night and Morning; when he is in trouble pray to the Almighty, (in his heart,) for assistance, when he is in prosperity thank the Almighty, (in his heart,) for his goodness. The Lord’s Prayer should be his firm hold.”²⁶⁵

The First Opium War

Joseph was working aboard this opium smuggling ship just a few years before the outbreak in 1839 of the first of two Opium Wars. Until the opium trade issues were resolved several years later by this war, opium smuggling was dangerous work.

Through a complex process, British merchants would trade opium they purchased in India for sycee, or Chinese silver. Here is one description of the process, from an 1836 “memorial” of Hsu Kiu to the Chinese Emperor:

“In the first year of the Ka Hing Emperor (1797) the foreigners imported a few hundred chests of opium; now it exceeds 20,000 chests, selling at \$500—900 per chest. The trade in opium is centred on Canton. Boats from the other provinces go to Lintin and buy opium from the receiving ships...

264 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. September 14, 1836.

265 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. October 24, 1836.



An engraving representing one of the battles of the First Opium War, the attack on the First Bar battery in the Canton River. From Edward Belcher (1843). Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

“China is closed to foreigners. The native traders cannot go to the receiving ships directly. They employ brokers who make wholesale purchases, Hong merchants who mediate the prices, resident foreigners at Canton who receive the money and write Delivery Orders to the receiving ships and ‘fast crabs’ to bring-in the opium.”²⁶⁶

Not all the opium from India was sold illegally to the Chinese; it was also imported to Britain and the United States. Trade was brisk due to Britain’s fascination with the substance at the beginning of the nineteenth century. From the turn of the nineteenth century until nearly the 1860s, the use of opium and related products was commonplace and access to it was unfettered by regulations. It wasn’t only used for strictly medicinal purposes, but became a popular ingredient in many products:

“Opium was available in different forms as well, which suited certain lifestyles and people’s preferences. Items such as opium soap, pills, lozenges, enemas, confections and things such as opium dissolved in alcohol, known as laudanum, all existed. The number of opium-related items that existed highlighted the widespread popularity and commonality of the drug itself. Apothecaries, pharmacists and even small-town shop people all sold forms of opium.”²⁶⁷

266 *Memorial of Hsu Kiu to the Emperor. Opium 1836-38, Part 3. A People’s History 1793-1844 from the newspapers.* Volume 9, No. 48. Houghton, Roger. November 29, 1836. Found 1/20/22 at <https://houghton.hk/opium-part-3/>.

267 *Opium and the People.* Berridge, Virginia & Edwards, Griffith. P. 24-28. Quoted in *Opium in Nineteenth-Century England.* Hutchinson, Hannah. 2020. In BSU Honors Program Theses and Projects. Item 332. Found 1/20/22 at https://vc.bridgew.edu/honors_proj/332.

Though bringing opium into Britain was legal and not considered even morally problematic by most in the early 1800s, China had a different view:

“The Opium Wars arose from China’s attempts to suppress the opium trade. Foreign traders (primarily British) had been illegally exporting opium mainly from India to China since the 18th century, but that trade grew dramatically from about 1820. The resulting widespread addiction in China was causing serious social and economic disruption there. In spring 1839 the Chinese government confiscated and destroyed more than 20,000 chests of opium—some 1,400 tons of the drug—that were warehoused at Canton by British merchants.”²⁶⁸

Ultimately, similar problems with unrestricted use of opium would crop up in England as well, leading to regulations being developed that would restrict its sale, distribution and use in the early 1860s.²⁶⁹

Joseph & *Antonia Pereira*

When he first joins the crew of *Antonia Pereira*, Joseph must do “plenty of work—attend upon the men—the chief mate—trim the lamps—mount the rigging and sweep the decks.”²⁷⁰ However, his hard work, apparent eagerness to learn navigation and the ways of the sailor add to his reputation with the captain, Mr. Christie.²⁷¹ He treats Joseph kindly, loaning him money on numerous occasions and giving him better jobs as time goes on. By his next voyage from Calcutta, he has moved up in the ranks:

“The Capt is very kind to me. I am doing very well. I live aft this voyage. I serve the grog out—keep all the stores—eat aft with the Capt. keep the Ships log & have got charge of the hold. For all these I have to thank Mr Christie whom my heart says I never can forget.”²⁷²

268 *Opium Wars: Chinese History*. Pletcher, Kenneth. Britannica.com. Found 4/14/20 at <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Opium-Wars>. The outcome of the First Opium War would be the Treaty of Nanjing, signed August 29, 1842. Among its provisions was the famous ceding of Hong Kong by China to the British, the increase in Chinese ports the British could live in and trade from one (Canton) to five, including Shanghai.

269 *ibid*.

270 Letter. Joseph Waters to Elizabeth Waters. August 15, 1836.

271 Though official records indicated this is the correct spelling of Mr. Christie’s name, Joseph will spell it both with and without an ‘e’ at the end. Even the captain himself will sign one letter spelling his name with no ‘e,’ if the transcription is accurate.

272 Letter. Joseph Waters to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. March 27, 1837.

By the time he writes again, just before Christmas 1836, Joseph is also anxious to let his father know that he is behaving better and growing up:

“Tell Papa that I am now beginning to throw off my boyish tricks and to think and act like a man. I have not (by the bye) forgotten those wise proverbs of his at the beginning of his old fashioned prayer book.”²⁷³

And he is thinking of his siblings:

“Tell Mary that silks of every description are very cheap. I hope she is well. Tell her I will send her home some after I have made one trip to China. Tell John that if he was here he should have a good ride in a Palanquin. Tom that he should have fruits of all sorts & sizes, Ben that he should have a wife & Liz a husband (for they marry here at 6 years old) and give dear little Sarah a kiss and a lump of candy for Joseph.”²⁷⁴

The *Pereira* lands on December 9 in Calcutta, India after having left the “lizard”²⁷⁵ on August 26 and Joseph describes the exotic scene:

“The river is as crooked as the Serpentine and although it is only a hundred and odd miles to Calcutta, we were four days beating up. About 1/2 a mile from Calcutta, the prospect & irregularity of the river suddenly ceases and presents a most magnificent & luscious sight to the beholder. It is perfectly straight from the last reach to Calcutta and on either side, Palaces & houses of the most beautiful and fantastic sculpture meet your eye...”²⁷⁶

The brig had loaded up with Indian opium and traveled to Canton to undertake the dangerous work of selling the narcotic to the Mandarins without being caught. Joseph describes the danger, and the corruption of the Chinese, who were more liable to extort the smugglers than send them for punishment:

“I saw plenty of smuggling boats this time they are tremendously long boats with about 100 to 150 men & pull 50 or 60 oars of a side. The Mandarines are their very great enemies, they are King Tuc’s navy and

273 *ibid.*

274 *ibid.*

275 Joseph refers here to the sacred River Ganges. According to the Myth of the Ganges, the goddess Ganga descended from heaven to dwell in the waters of the Ganges River to protect, purify, and bring to heaven those who touch it.

For more: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ganges>.

276 Letter. Joseph Waters to his mother Elizabeth Waters. January 2, 1837.

are very cruel & extortionate to the natives, If they see a bumb-boat²⁷⁷ come alongside of a vessel—directly it leaves they will make him refund two parts of his money and if he will not give it will “squeeze him” which is one of their diabolical tortures.”²⁷⁸

A vigorous debate is being held during this time in China about whether to subvert all the illegal activity by legalizing opium, regulating and taxing it, but the anti-legalization side, like Hsu Kiu, votes for creating much more strict enforcement:

“The traitorous Chinese who deal in opium, the Hong merchants who mediate the prices, the brokers who make wholesale purchases, the ‘fast crabs’ that import it, the military who receive bribes to let it pass—they should all be subjected to rigorous and secret surveillance, seized and punished severely so we may be free of corruption.”²⁷⁹

Tensions over the opium trade will soon lead to the First Opium War.

Trouble in the wind

Like his father, Joseph offers descriptions of the places and people he encounters. He has landed at Calcutta, India, in the fall of 1837 and reflects on what he has seen:

“The vessel took in a good cargo at China—lots of treasure. We arrived at Calcutta on the 2nd of this month. I know a little more of the Chinese now than I did before—they are invariably the most thieftish [sic]—dissipated & lying set that I ever yet heard, read or seen, they will steal a thing almost before your eyes—& if found out will never confess the theft. They worship “Joss” the “God of Fire.” It appears rather curious to a stranger to see these infidels offering up their prayers, nodding—skipping—curtseying &

277 Also spelled “bumboat” or “bumpboat,” a large, flat-bottomed vessel used for short trips of people or cargo from anchored ships to shore, originally from Singapore. For more: https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_956_2004-12-15.html.

278 Letter. Joseph Waters to Elizabeth and Thomas Waters Sr. September 19, 1837.

279 *Memorial of Hsu Kiu to the Emperor. Opium 1836-38, Part 3. A People's History 1793-1844 from the newspapers.* Volume 9, No. 48. Houghton, Roger. November 29, 1836. Found 1/20/22 at <https://houghton.hk/opium-part-3/>.

bowing to a paper fire²⁸⁰ & then letting off crackers & other fire-works. Almost any of them will sell you the babes in their wives [sic] arms for a trifling sum. The women are very ugly but like the Bengalees [sic] are ornamented with rings round their necks—wrists—ancles [sic]—over their fingers & toes & through their noses-ears etc...

“They eat dogs for which reason when I took “Pat” (Mr. Christie’s dog) ashore—I was obliged to keep a good eye upon him...”²⁸¹

From the beginning, *Antonia Pereira* seems doomed, though it is by all accounts a fine brig: “She is...a regular clipper & although there are a great number of fine vessels in the harbour, yet she universally takes the superiority, both in the point of beauty & sailing,” Joseph writes.²⁸²

Nonetheless, the ship is by the crew’s own admission quite accident-prone as well as frequently encountering nasty squalls on the route between Calcutta and Canton. Joseph describes one such accident:

“This time we made rather a long passage—we started in March from Calcutta touched at Singapore & in 21 days more arrived in China—after remaining there for some time we made a voyage up the N.E. coast—the 1st attempt we made we met with a sad accident. The vessel was taken in a flurry of the tide & with every thing “*flat aback*” hove upon the rocks, in consequence of which we were obliged to return. She was inspected & it was decided that she was able to make another voyage—but that when she arrived at Calcutta she must undergo a thorough repair. The second attempt we made likewise proved unsuccessful but in a different manner. There were too many Mandarines there so that the Capt could not sell his opium.”²⁸³

One of the sailors is a victim of another of the Pereira’s accidents:

“We lost another Lascar this voyage—his name was “Tuta Esmaul”—We were off the Ladrone isds. The night before it looked very squally—lightened & thundered tremendously: the Capt expected a Tifoun [sic]—in short it

280 Joseph is describing Joss paper, also known as incense papers, which are papercrafts or sheets of paper made into burnt offerings common in Chinese ancestral worship. For more: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joss_paper.

281 Letter. Joseph Waters to Elizabeth & Thomas Waters Sr. September 19, 1837.

282 Letter. Joseph Waters to Elizabeth Waters. December 18, 1836.

283 Letter. Joseph Waters to Elizabeth and Thomas Waters Sr. September 19, 1837.

was really as you say “an hour of Darkness” indeed. It was in studsails down royal yards—top gallant yards close reef the topsails—furl the foresail & mainsail and haul down the Gibs. However it did not come to much—so next morning it was up top-gallant yards. Esmaul while steadying the lower yard arm from the topmast rigging just before they had put on the lifts & braces fell overboard (not quite) for as he fell he struck his head upon the rail which cut the top of his scull clean off. No other person could have been a better Calashe!”²⁸⁴

Joseph himself is victim of a shipboard robbery while he is enjoying a perk of befriending the ship’s officers:

“From an introduction by Mr Christi I was invited down to Barhappoore [sic] for 4 days along with the officers of the regiment stationed there. I spent my time very comfortably—but when I came back I nearly regretted it—I found that I had lost 16 pieces of clothes viz 10 new W shirts—2 new pair of trousers 3 silk handkerchief & 1 white jacket—they had been stolen from me in my absence—in consequence I was obliged to have resource to my last 10 rs.”²⁸⁵

He describes his work and life in more detail, as well as yet another nearly fatal incident at sea that causes severe damage to *Pereira*:

“You have no idea what a state our brig is in now, she is quite a wreck—when we were on the “*Sands Heads*” about 6 days before we made the Calcutta pilot last voyage—we experienced a severe gale of wind, carried away all our weather rail, & we were very nearly lost...

“...but now we are still worse—for 23 days I never had clean clothes on or dry, seldom at night time. The few clothes that I brought with me from Calcutta are every one either lost or rotten...

“...I had no idea you had no idea what an apprentice in the country service is. I keep the captain’s watch in the Evening—can work the Longitude & take sights for the Chronometer & order 30 men—Where can I wear check shirts or Duck frocks. I have got no dirty work. I never go aloft except to reef topsails. To give you a little idea of the weather we had Ill

284 *ibid.*

285 Letter. Joseph Waters to Elizabeth Waters. December 3, 1837.

tell you what sails we lost on our passage from Singapore to China besides smashing in our boats & our Bulwarks. We split a new Jib—Fore top-mast staysail—Foresail & two topsails—to crown all—a fore staysail of (N.† I) when that split it went off like a clap of thunder—everything was furled, the Capt has entered a protest for our cargo which was very lucky as it is nearly all wet & damaged...

“Every one on board declared that they never experienced such a continuance of bad weather. The “*Sylph*” lost every one of her sails & out of 50 Calashes could only muster 6 men to work ship. The “*Ariel*” a new clipper with 14,000 chests of opium in her started about a month before us from Singapore, has never since been heard of.”²⁸⁶

As he is becoming a man under wild and dangerous conditions, Joseph seems to have reformed himself, and he hopes that his parents are proud of him:

“The advice you gave me—I feel is too true & I will endeavour to abide by it. God grant that I may. I am very glad that you sent me that extract from my father’s letter. I was much pleased with what he said & thought of me & I hope that he will soon believe I am really improved in all my qualities.”²⁸⁷

His qualities are confirmed in a brief letter from Mr. Christie:

“Dear Madam

As your Son is not in receipt of any money just now I have advanced and will continue to advance what little he may want—but would thank you in your next letter to mention how far he is to draw. We are now in all the bustle & confusion of a start from China so you must excuse my not giving you a longer account of his conduct than that he has given me every satisfaction since he has been here (on the Ship) and that his Capt. is highly pleased with him.

I will take another opportunity of informing you of that which I am sure will give you great pleasure to hear.

I remain

My Dear Madam

Yours very truly Wm T Christi”²⁸⁸

²⁸⁶ *ibid.*

²⁸⁷ Letter. Joseph Waters to Elizabeth Waters. December 3, 1837.

²⁸⁸ Letter. William Christi to Elizabeth Waters. December 3, 1937.

The following letter is undated, and it appears to have been added onto the December 3 letter as it has no separate address or date, and a postscript is written at the bottom and signed “JW,” presumably Joseph Waters:

“The whole of this letter was written in such a hurry that you must excuse the writing—Mr Christi wrote what he has said on board the Hercules actually standing up on a case of opium.

“Not a minute to myself...”²⁸⁹

By January 1838, Joseph is in Singapore on his fourth voyage to China with 850 chests of opium on board. “We are regularly ‘chock a block,’ he writes.²⁹⁰ And, the mishaps associated with *Pereira* continue to mount:

“Our brig is rather unfortunate as regards accidents. This time in Calcutta as one of the crew was coming alongside in a “dingey” with his wife—he fell overboard singing “God Save the King” and never rose more though an excellent swimmer.”²⁹¹

Even with the dangers and discomforts, Joseph likes his job and his life, even if not the part of the world he is in:

“I like the vessel very well but cannot say I like the country so well. people say I have grown stouter but they all speak ironically I think. I live aft consequently I am obliged to keep myself clean—every day a white shirt—white jacket & a clean Pr of trousers socks etc. Clothes out here last a very short time, last voyage I bought 4 doz W shirts & I have only 3 fit to wear out of them now—trousers—frocks etc all go the same way, You perspire so profusely that everything on you becomes saturated—there is nothing like perspiration for rotting clothes.”²⁹²

In many letters, such as this one, he credits the captain and an officer with having helped make his difficult life a little easier:

“Mr Christi & Captain Young are very kind to me—from the former I have picked up a little navigation and from both as much of the seafaring affairs as (I flatter myself) any youngster can muster, who has been my short time at sea.”²⁹³

289 Letter. Joseph Waters to Elizabeth Waters. Undated.

290 Letter. Joseph Waters to Elizabeth Waters. January 1838. (no date).

291 *ibid.*

292 *ibid.*

293 *ibid.*

He also asks after his siblings, and reiterates his hope that his parents will be regarding him more highly now that he has improved his character:

“How do the mill—the garden & the pigeons get on. Mary’s flowers—I suppose are wonderfully increased—John & Tom I hope catch plenty of fish in the canal. I wish I could shew them some of the fish we ketch out here such as the Shirk—the blackfish—the Dolphin, the albicore [sic] or the Benneta. Give Ben Elizabeth & Sarah a sweet good kiss for me & believe me ever to be your most affectionate son...

“PS. hope my dear father is enjoying good health. my character given by my kind friend Mr Christi will, I trust make him & you think better of me although well indeed—I know to my sorrow that it is more than I can expect...”²⁹⁴

Two months later, Thomas Waters receives a letter addressed only to him, the only such letter in existence. It will be the last letter Thomas and Elizabeth receive from Joseph. It is written on March 21, 1838, from Whampoa:

“Dear Father,

“The letter I now send you is written on board of a small schooner in the river Tigris about 10 miles from Canton. I am employed in rather a dangerous trade—smuggling opium from Lintin up to the Great City—I am I assure you obliged to keep a good look out for the Mandarines—as they have the strictest orders from their king to slay the barbarian smugglers and to burn the drug found in the boat. —I really cannot describe to you the grandeur of the scenery on this river—the tremendous and barren mountains—the paddy fields and pastures on the flats—the grotesque villages with their tall pagodas in the centre—peeping from between the hills— the groups of Tancar boats in the river—pulled & steered by neatly dressed young females—the immense forts—the huge junks & the European shipping at Whampoa, all unite to confuse a good description. I have not yet visited Canton but I have been close under it in the night time. Europeans are daily dying here owing to their drinking spirit called “*Samshew*.” Mr Christi is at present Captain of the brig and has taken her two voyages up the West coast of China, as far as Tienpack—when I saw him last he was quite well. I have paid him 50 rs twenty of which I gained upon my cheroots. I am really very much alarmed at not having received

a letter from either my mother or you—Although I take the greatest care of my clothes it is impossible to find them without borrowing—I am 80 rupees in debt now & could not avoid it, it really hurts my feelings when I let you know this, but I am in hopes that if ever you hear of my conduct since I left you it will satisfy you that I am not the same as I once was. I hope you my mother—my sisters & brothers are all as well as I am at present. Capt Young is quite well—I remain my Dear father

“Your dutiful son

Jos^h Waters

“Mr Christi & the Capt are as kind as ever to me.”²⁹⁵

Proof of death

Just a few months later, young Joseph’s life is tragically cut short when *Antonio Pereira* founders in the China Sea en route from Singapore to Canton in the summer of 1838. No one on board was ever heard from again. The official report says:

“July 1838. Sailed from Singapore and was never seen again. A ship reported seeing the topgallant masts of a foundered vessel a little to the Eastward of the Paracels, and it was generally concluded that these belonged to the unfortunate ‘Antonio Pereira’. It is probable that the brig’s captain risked cutting through the Paracels and got caught on a reef.

“19th October 1838. Elliot to J.M. & Co as agents of the Canton Insurance Office.

“HMS ‘Larne’ has completed a search of the Paracels, Indo-Chinese coast and Hainan in nine weeks without finding any trace if the missing brig ‘Antonio Pereira’ that you insured.

“Captain Young, former commander of the ‘Antonio Pereira’, assisted in the search. HMS ‘Larne’ was unable to definitively search the Bombay shoal. Sgt Elliot, Chief Superintendent.”²⁹⁶

This kind of loss report happened from time to time, where there was no proof of whether any crew or passengers survived a shipwreck. Without what was called “proof of death,” grieving families could not bring closure to their loss. With no body to bury, Elizabeth and Thomas might never fully release the

295 Letter. Joseph Waters to Thomas Waters Sr. March 21, 1838.

296 *Antonio Pereira*. Green, Wigram’s & Green. Found 4/13/21 at <http://historic-shipping.co.uk>.

notion that Joseph might have survived and be alive on some far-flung island. It is a psychological burden hard to imagine.

Perhaps that grief is lightened slightly for Thomas by a letter received the next spring from W.O. Young, who had been captain of *Pereira* until it was turned over to Mr. Christie at some point before Joseph's letter in March 1838.

It is a touching letter, reassuring Joseph's father that he had indeed become the young man Thomas had hoped he would be:

"Sir

"I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter with an order for six pounds fifteen shillings and sixpence which order I have cancelled as I consider your son had by his services deserved the small sum which I advanced to him and the only inducement for my sending the acct was to show you how the sum you sent with him had been expended. —I mentioned to Miss Christie that I had made him a present of the money & did not expect you to pay it.

"Your son was a very promising young man & gave me great satisfaction —had charge of a watch for some time previous to this melancholy loss. I can give you no information how this occurred as the vessel has never been heard or any thing seen of her. I shall be down at the Yard of Messrs Wigrum & Greens every day for at least the first ten days as I have another vessel Building there & will be glad to see you. I would make a point of calling upon you if you cannot come & meet me. I remain

"Yours truly

W.O. Young"²⁹⁷

297 Letter. Captain W.O. Young to Thomas Waters. April 22, 1839.

Chapter 11

John, the Age of Steam & the Quakers

WITH THE DEATH OF HER UNCLE, King William IV, on June 20, 1837, eighteen-year-old Victoria becomes Queen of the British Empire, thus ushering out the Georgian Era, and beginning what would be the longest reign in British history until Queen Elizabeth II. Her sixty-four-year reign becomes known as the Victorian Era.

During this time, Britain transforms from a predominantly rural, agricultural society into an urban, industrial one. New technologies like railroads and the steam printing press unite Britons both physically and intellectually. Although now the period is popularly known as a time of prim, conservative moral values, the Victorians perceived their world as rapidly changing.²⁹⁸

One of the major innovations of the Victorian era was steam-fueled transportation, giving rise to what is now called the Victorian Age of Steam, which would endure past Queen Victoria. Victorian railways would create modern Britain as the public fell in love with train travel, and railways created many new behaviours and traditions that “today we might regard as essentially British in character.”²⁹⁹

298 *The Victorian Period*. Bowden, M. Eastern Connecticut State University. Found 1/22/2021 at <https://www.easterncct.edu/speichera/understanding-literary-history-all/the-victorian-period.html>.

299 *How the age of steam changed lives forever*. Drabwell, Christine. July 28, 2016. Found 2/5/22 at <https://ounews.co/around-ou/tv-radio/series-studies-pioneering-steam-industry/>.

Thomas Sr. had traveled from London to Birmingham for his recruiting assignment on one of the earliest versions of what was called the steam carriage. From his description of it, we can guess that it might have at least resembled the cartoon caricature in image below. The steam carriage was the beginning of transportation-related pollution, as it required coal to heat the water that created the steam. Dirty coal smoke filled the air surrounding the carriage. Carriages were banned from many roads at this time and could only travel at a maximum speed of twenty miles per hour. At this rate, it would have taken Thomas at least seven hours to travel the 130-mile distance between the two locations, assuming there were no stops to refuel, or let other people off. Today, that drive takes a little more than two hours. Still, the steam carriage was the height of new technology. Here is Thomas' depiction of his trip on February 1, 1840:

“I like the steam carriage very well but saw, I may say, nothing, not a gentleman's seat or park. We passed through no town nor scarcely a village, but through deep sunk roads, tunnels, and valleys, a lamp lighted in the roof of the carriage almost all the way. The carriages are roomy, three sitting a side, but you are the same as if you were in an easy elbow chair, not touching each other.”³⁰⁰



The first steam powered vehicle able to transport people was built by Walter Hancock in 1833. Ziskqs, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

300 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. February 2, 1840.

From wood to iron

The impact of these new technologies on military and merchant sailing industries cannot be overstated. The invention of the steam-powered paddlewheel ship and steam-powered engines for new iron military ships revolutionizes sailing, allowing a ship's progress not to be completely dependent on the winds. Now a ship could be propelled forward by mechanical means rather than the artful assembling and manipulating of a complex set of masted sails.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, the shipbuilding industry on the Thames was highly innovative and produced some of the most technologically advanced vessels in the world.³⁰¹

John Waters does not take a life at sea but contributes to the industry in another way. He is gifted in mathematics and the sciences and goes into a seven-year engineering apprenticeship with the prestigious engineering firm, Miller & Ravenhill, in London on June 11, 1833, at age twelve.³⁰² At the end of his apprenticeship in 1840, nineteen-year-old John has become a bookish young man still studying engineering while also working for Miller & Ravenhill. Described as “of mild manner and weak physique,”³⁰³ he will soon contract tuberculosis. But for now, he is living on his own, a young professional in London.

Miller & Ravenhill

Joseph Miller had his own firm since 1822 and in 1835 formed a partnership with Richard Ravenhill.³⁰⁴ They were marine-engine makers of Glasshouse Fields, Ratcliff. In 1838, desiring a riverside site where ships could lay up alongside to have their engines installed or removed, they took over Orchard Wharf, situated between Orchard House Stairs and the old East India Docks. It was ideal for their purposes: it boasted a river frontage of nearly 500 feet and a street frontage to Orchard Place of 450 feet.

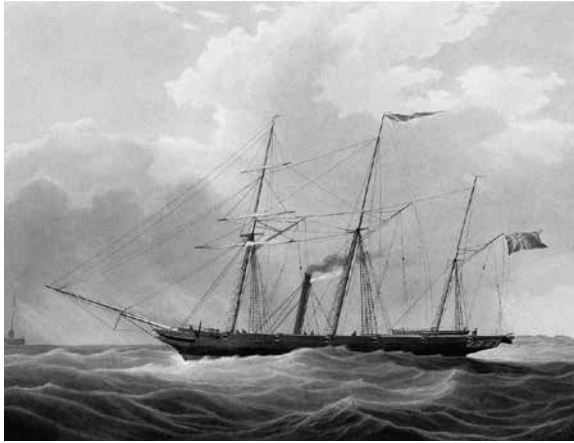
However, the firm did not restrict itself to making engines. Almost immediately they began building iron ships on the site, the first of which, a Rhine

301 *Shipbuilding*. 19th Century London. Wikipedia. Found 2/5/22 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/19th-century_London.

302 *The Waters Family, Volume IV*. Turvey. Sheila. P. 1.

303 *The Waters Family, Volume IV*. Turvey. Sheila. P. 15.

304 *Miller and Ravenhill*. Grace's Guide to British Industrial History. Found 1/12/22 at https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Miller_and_Ravenhill.



S.S. Archimedes, fitted with Mr. F.P. Smith's Patent Screw Propeller on her trip from Gravesend to Portsmouth. May 14, 1839. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

paddle-steamer called the *Victoria*, was completed in 1839. Most of the ships built there between 1839 and 1847 were paddle steamers.³⁰⁵

Perhaps one of the most famous ships they worked on was *S.S. Archimedes*, built in London in 1838. Named after the third century inventor of the screw to pump water, *Archimedes* was a beautiful schooner. She was the first vessel to be driven successfully by a screw propeller rather than by steam-powered paddle wheels, and as such, had considerable influence on ship development.³⁰⁶ Her maiden river and sea voyages on May 2 and 15, 1839 were successful, but on a return voyage to London, the ship's boiler, which lacked either a gauge or a safety valve, exploded, killing the second engineer and scalding several others. After five months of repairs, the ship sailed to the Netherlands for a demonstration to the Dutch government.

As John Waters apprenticed at Miller & Ravenhill from 1833-1840, he most likely was at least an observer to the occasion when, on the 1839 voyage, "*Archimedes* broke her crankshaft and was forced to return to England for further repairs, which on this occasion were effected by the firm of Miller, Ravenhill & Co."³⁰⁷ A new and better propeller replaced the old one and it had the advantage of "considerably reducing the ship's vibration at the stern."³⁰⁸

305 *ibid.*

306 *SS Archimedes*. Found 2/3/22 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS_Archimedes.

307 *Transatlantic: Samuel Cunard, Isambard Brunel, and the Great Atlantic Steamships*. Fox, Stephen. HarperCollins. 2003. P. 146.

308 *ibid.*



This portrait of Joseph Miller was commissioned by the Institution of Civil Engineers in England, of which Miller was a lifelong member and Council member. The created portrait still hangs in their board room. The donation was used to establish a Miller Medal for students. Courtesy Institution of Civil Engineers, London, UK.

Joseph Miller

We know that John's boss, Joseph Miller, who was thirty-six when John joins the firm, was not only a highly respected engineer, but he was also a man of great aesthetic tastes. As a child Miller had been obsessed with the construction of machinery. As a teenager, he brought his portfolio to the celebrated Soho Works, owned by the famous James Watt (inventor of the steam engine), and his future was determined:

“Great interest was at that time requisite to enable an apprentice to be received in the already celebrated Soho Works; but on Mr. James Watt having laid before him the memorandum books and sketches of the would-be engineer, and finding from his conversation that his acquirements were above the average, he consented to his being articled to the firm, and Joseph Miller entered the Soho Works at the age of about fifteen years.”³⁰⁹

Miller grew into a formidable engineer, one of the greats of his time, but he was also an art collector and a Fellow of the Royal Society. He held salons

309 *Mr. Joseph Miller. Memoirs. Minutes of the Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers.* Volume 20, Issue 1861. P. 155. Author Unknown. Found 1/20/22 at <https://www.icevirtuallibrary.com/doi/10.1680/imotp.1861.23447>.

with “artists and literary men” in his home and enjoyed evenings with future stars at the Shakespeare Club.

Excerpts from an obituary describe his rare ability to comfortably inhabit the worlds of both science and art, applying his aesthetic perspective to his design work:

“Mr. Miller was possessed naturally of an appreciation of beauty of form and of proportion which enabled him to sketch the various parts of a machine almost with the accuracy of a drawing made to a scale, and hence the peculiar aptness of form and fitness of proportion which characterized all his engines.

“...He was a pure mechanic naturally, he had carefully cultivated his tastes by study, and the daily practice of his art completed his qualifications.”³¹⁰

“A man of artistic and literary tastes, Miller, in his engines, endeavoured to combine strength with lightness, and they were always known for their graceful proportions.”³¹¹

From this description, we can see the man that likely guided John in his own education and at the very least served as a role model that his father would appreciate:

“He was a man of philosophic spirit, and an inquiring mind, with a calm manner and apparently an unruffled temper, withal he possessed untiring energy and indomitable courage and perseverance; but more especially he was remarkable for his rare social qualities. There were few such warm friends as he...”³¹²

John seeks a promotion

As John learns the ropes at Miller & Ravenhill, he calls on his father for advice and his father responds. In February, John is aggrieved at having to copy Mr. Miller’s drawings, when he presumably would rather be building an engine.

³¹⁰ *ibid.*

³¹¹ *A Short History of Naval and Marine Engineering.* Smith, Edgar. P. 370-71. 2013.

³¹² *Mr. Joseph Miller. Memoirs. Minutes of the Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers.* Volume 20, Issue 1861. P. 156. Author Unknown. Found 1/20/22 at <https://www.icevirtuallibrary.com/doi/10.1680/imotp.1861.23447>. Miller retired in 1852 and died at age sixty-three on February 23, 1860.

Thomas shares John's situation with Elizabeth and offers funds to help with the engine materials costs, though his son has declined:

“Poor John, he must have been very much annoyed at being taxed with copying Mr. Miller's drawings, but he must expect many of those annoyances and false charges, if he gets on in the world, there is no existing without uneasiness, but he must bear up, and God will help him through, let conscience be his guide, I am sorry Mr. Richardson was blamed, although no fault of John's...”³¹³

“As John is providing materials for making an engine I directed him to ask you for money for that purpose and for you to place it to my account, he did not ask me for it but I am willing to forward the boy in his good intentions as much as I can.”³¹⁴

A few months later, John has worked up the courage to ask Mr. Miller to be moved. Thomas voices his approval to Elizabeth, and we learn that John is very serious about moving up in the company:

“I am glad John has spoken to Mr. Millar [sic] about being removed to another branch of the mechanic engineering, it is much better than going to another person to speak for him, and he would have been wrong not to have made any application as he has now shown to Mr. Millar [sic] how anxious he is to learn the whole business and that he has zeal to become perfect which will make Mr. Millar [sic] more inclined to take him by the hand than he would if he perceived John unconcerned about whether he got on in his business or not.”³¹⁵

His father advises him to listen and learn from Mr. Miller in particular, as one of the most respected engineers of the time:

“With respect My dear Son to your not being moved into another part of the factory, never you mind but wait patiently, redouble your efforts, if possible, to please, do not show a discontented humour to your employers but persevere in endeavouring to please them in an upright and becoming

313 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. February 11, 1840.

314 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. June 5, 1840.

315 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to John Waters. June 24, 1840.

manner never sacrificing [sic] your morals or your Religion to please even your Parents but always to what is proper, Mr. Millar [sic] worked, I believe, several years as a journeyman to improve his knowledge and to learn what he had not learned during his apprenticeship, you may perceive that much may be learned in other parts of the factory where you are not stationed, by looking on occasionally and by making inquiry when you have opportunities, particularly if you can have the good will of the leading workmen, who have it in their power to teach you a great deal, but as I said before much may be learned by a clever person's looking on and making his observations; otherwise why should the partners be so tenacious in objecting to strangers going over their Factory, in fact I believe a clever person will actually learn more by looking about the works taking notice making his memoranda when at his residence and afterwards trying his ingenuity, than a dull stupid indolent person will, who may be all his lifetime learning and yet acquire but a little commonplace knowledge of his business, a mere cutting and chopping rubbing (or perhaps I might say robbing,) and carrying, you heard what Mr. Millar [sic] said about Engineering that the Art of it may be acquired without actually working at it, that is the theory only, but then the practice also is what you want for the theory to you without the practice will be but of little use I imagine, and you must not give up your endeavours to attain it until you have gained your point, but have patience as well as perseverance but above all endeavour to be possessed of Prudence, for without that if you have all the ingenuity of the celebrated engineer Watts and of other great characters it will be but of little avail to you, for it will only tend to make other men rich and you dependant [sic] upon their Avance, therefore be patient be persevering in what is right be prudent and all the rest will follow."³¹⁶

Later Thomas also advises John on the suspicious behaviour of a competing firm's engineer called "Billings" who may be engaged in some trade espionage:

"I think young Billings did not show good sense in asking to see the Factory having seen it twice previously, considering that he belongs to a rival factory and between you and I, I think he has a weak head, his asking again was presumption, I wonder how he could have been so forward,

316 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to John Waters. August 21, 1840..

depend upon it he has not genius to take advantage of what may come under his observation or he would find a better way to obtain his end, if he has an end in view but I think he is merely a tool to some one else who at least endeavours to make him one, therefore I recommend you to be upon your guard that you are not made a tool of also by those who have no right, and to your own ruin of prospects for if there appears to be any connection between you and another of a rival department, depend upon it you will rue it, therefore have nothing to do with his Engine drawing is my advice, why cannot you learn to draw one yourself, I think, better than he can, but as I said I think he is a tool and somebody wants to make one of you therefore beware how you are not caught in their snare.”³¹⁷

While Thomas has lived through the Great Age of Sail, his son John will help build the newly invented steam-powered and screw pump engines of the Great Age of Steam that will power the iron military ships for the next generation of British Royal Marines. This invention and these new ships will come to represent one of the great achievements of the Industrial Age.

Victorian morality & religion

“Victorian morality” is often used to describe the ethos of the period, which embraced sexual propriety, hard work, honesty, thrift, a sense of duty and responsibility towards the less well off, provided they deserved help (alcoholics and the “work-shy” did not).³¹⁸

Though Elizabeth and Thomas’ faith appears at the center of their lives, the church is not. Apparently, one must pay to attend church, as well as be expected to contribute to other projects.

In August, Thomas tells Elizabeth:

“I am very glad to find from you that it is not your intention to be churched, I do think it a mere ceremony invented by the Priests for the purpose of extorting money in ancient times, I do think you can return thanks to the Almighty in your own house quite as effectually as you

³¹⁷ *ibid.*

³¹⁸ *Victorian era. New World Encyclopedia.* Found 4/22/21 at https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/victorian_era.

would in a church and far more so than the Parson could for you, and you can repeat your thanks at the proper time in your own Pew, when your health and the baby's age will better admit of it, without parade or show, until then I think your prayers at home and your attention to the Infant and to your other domestic affairs are of far more consequence to the welfare of the family, put your shoulder to your family duties, and then pray, otherwise I fear your prayers will have but little effect if any, otherwise than that God might put it into your mind to exert yourself."

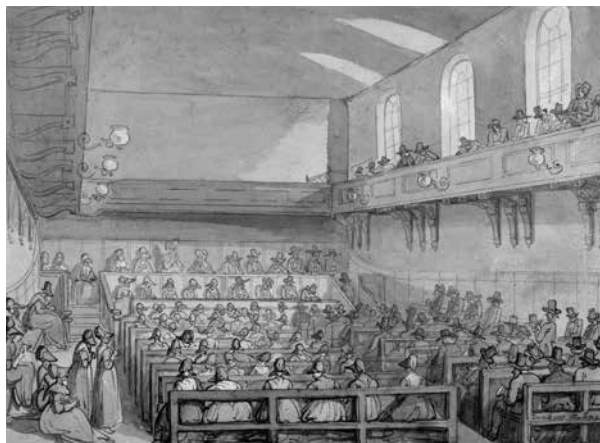
He goes on, and slips in a comment about children's birth registrations—interesting, since his own does not show the names of either of his parents:

"It is an excellent thing that Parents can now get their children's births registered without being beholden to the clergyman, a proof that our Laws are improving and I hope they will go on improving, I think it hard that we should be obliged to support the church when it has endowments for that purpose and we have to pay for a sitting besides, and yet we see the various denominations of Dissenters so amply providing, voluntary, for their worship and places of worship, and why should not the established church also? if it is far more numerous, of course, it is far more able to provide for itself voluntarily which I trust, in time, it will be obliged to do for itself as separatists do now, the Roman Catholics are building a splendid edifice here the building alone it is said will cost forty thousand pounds besides the deal of money that has been laid out in land and old building with which it was occupied and the Catholics are going to endow their church, it is said, and to provide a mansion here for a Bishop."³¹⁹

In his letter, Thomas refers to the "separatists." During the early Victorian era, religious faith in England is splintering into evangelical and even atheist beliefs. The working class, women, and people of color are agitating for the right to vote and rule themselves. Reformers fight for safe workplaces, sanitary reforms, and universal education.³²⁰ These same values are also shared by a peaceful, but radical, religious group that gains strength in England in the Victorian era, the Quakers.

319 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. August 28, 1840.

320 *The Victorian Period*. Bowden, Mary. Eastern Connecticut State University. Found 1/14/20 at <https://www.easternct.edu/speichera/understanding-literary-history-all/the-victorian-period.html>.



An artist's rendering of a typical Quaker meeting, illustrating the meeting hall and attire of men and women. The drawing also shows the women and men segregated. By Thomas Rowlandson. Yale Center for British Art. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

The Quakers

Thomas first encounters the Religious Society of Friends, more commonly known as the Quakers, while recruiting in Birmingham in the winter of 1840.

Established in England in the 1600s by George Fox, the Quakers became known for their silent workshop that focused on “inward light” being the Spirit prompting them to speak; they were very different from the other religions of the day.³²¹ The Quakers were persecuted in England and the New World until the nineteenth century, and their leaders often ended up in prison.

Their vigorous support of causes such as the abolition of slavery and prison reform made Quakers more prominent in the nineteenth century, and membership remained near 16,000 during the Victorian period. They developed close-knit, well-to-do communities.

When Thomas arrives in Birmingham, as part of getting settled into a house owned by two elderly sisters, he attends a large Quaker meeting:

“I was at the Quaker’s meeting this fore noon [morning]. The room was small but comfortably warmed. I suppose it would hold between 200 and 300 people. I suppose there were 150 or more in the house. An elderly female addressed the congregation and afterwards another said a prayer...”³²²

321 *Quakers. The Society of Friends in Victorian Britain*. Found 1/20/2021 at <http://www.victorianweb.org/religion/quakers.html>.

322 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. February 9, 1840.

Thomas habitually attends the Quaker meetings, which he describes:

“I was at the Friends’ meeting this morning. The only discourse, which was a pretty long one, was from a female. I regularly attend Sundays. There is seldom much said. The females, I think, are the most frequent speakers. We sit very composed, no one attempting to converse with another. We go in at 10 o’clock and out about 12, or a little before generally...”³²³

He makes several observations about the Quakers outside the meetings as well:

“I send you some comfort to assist Patience.³²⁴ You may rely upon the purity of it; I bought it at a very respectable Druggist’s shop, the Proprietors of which are Quakers. I must say I feel greater confidence in dealing with Quakers (although I am not acquainted with a single individual of them) than I do with any other people who may be alike strangers to me.”³²⁵

While Thomas appreciates their business sense, he is critical of their strict methods of child-rearing:

“How is it that the Quakers increase so few in number? One would suppose that the multiplication of their families would increase them to an amazing extent. The fact is I believe it does not do to attempt to bring up children so very rigidly. It makes home and all its ways irksome to them, and when they can, they break from it and follow other ways. Reading the Scriptures constantly to the children...what attention do they pay to it, kneeling down often and praying...do they attend to it? The more tasks they have to learn, do they like them the better? Give them now and then some wholesome advice, some short pithy sentences, and probably they may attend to them, but not to long dry discourses, the same thing over and over.”³²⁶

Just a few weeks after this letter from Thomas to Elizabeth, Quakers hold a major event at Exeter Hall in London. June 12-23, 1840, was the World

323 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. March 22, 1840.

324 It is likely this was some kind of sedative. The most common in those days was laudanum, a combination of opium and alcohol. At that time, opiates, and opium itself, were commonly used to treat a variety of conditions, including “nervousness” and sleeplessness, which we would today call anxiety and/or depression. For more: https://www.jstor.org/stable/3827593?read-now=1&seq=4#page_scan_tab_contents.

325 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. March 22, 1840.

326 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. May 25, 1840.



Benjamin Robert Haydon made this famous painting of the convention a year after the event. National Portrait Gallery. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

Anti-Slavery Convention, organized by Quaker Joseph Sturge and the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society.³²⁷

Thomas also appears to approve of and even admire the way they go about their lives generally and their religious comportment in society:

“The Quakers I believe do not aim at great riches nor will they endeavour to acquire riches but by conscientious means and in those things only which accord with Peace. Yet they appear to me never to lose sight of the main thing, that is the means of subsistence, whether Sunday or other day. I do not mean by opening shop. They have a quiet way of attending to business by thought, word of mouth, note or so on. They do things quietly after their own way.

I have not observed a person at their meeting yet that appeared to be really poor, the Friends certainly do not appear anxious to gain proselytes, though they seem desirous to turn the wicked from their evil ways. They erect tents occasionally to preach in those places where there is a probability of attracting bad characters who will not go to church or any other established place of Worship. There are Quakers who go about from place to place in England as Missionaries, directing their attention solely to the abandoned,

327 Apparently, their sense of freedom didn't apply to women, as they were banned from this event. It was this snub that gave great impetus to the women's suffrage movement in the United States. From *Women Who Speak for an Entire Nation: American and British Women Compared at the World Anti-Slavery Convention, London, 1840*. Sklar, Kathryn. 1990. *Pacific Historical Review*.

for the purpose of reforming them, not for the object of turning them to their own faith but to convert them from their evil ways and lead them into the principles of Christianity, the motive in my opinion is admirable...”³²⁸

John becomes a Quaker

Thomas gives his blessing in 1841 for son John to become a Quaker of the Deptford (London) meeting. In this passage we get another glimpse of Thomas’ rather liberal views, this time on religion:

“I am delighted to find that it is John’s intention to join the Society of Friends. My children, all, have my blessing, and I wish them to follow their own Religious Persuasions. Let them be but good and they will have the Almighty’s Blessing. Where my own mind’s eye is dim, at least, how can I pretend to tell others which is the way to Heaven? It is the Heavenly Power, only, that can do it, and it is to that Power they must address their Prayers. If they do so I am sure they will be heard...”³²⁹

John is described as “a devout Quaker,” he takes his youngest brother Ben along with him to meetings. “Little Ben and big John,” in his “Quaker-cut coat,” are observed going off to the Quaker meeting house hand in hand.³³⁰

328 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. June 28, 1840.

329 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. November 16, 1841.

330 *The Waters Family, Volume IV*. Turvey, Sheila. P. 15.

Chapter 12

Tom Follows in Father's Footsteps

*When a man comes to like
a sea life, he is not fit to live on land.*

DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON, WRITER (1709-1784)

ON APRIL 16, 1840, Thomas Sr.'s seventeen-year-old namesake Thomas Jr. signs on as an apprentice to the whaling ship *Barque Fawn*. His father is still in Birmingham recruiting, and his mother is pregnant with what will be her last child. It has been less than two years since Thomas' older brother Joseph was lost at sea. Both parents are still grieving this loss, and now another son is leaving on a ship.

It's clear that his father loves Tom deeply and he is troubled by his departure. In February, while the parents are helping fit out their son for sea, Thomas Sr. reminisces about a trip the two had recently taken to London:

"Thomas is such a good lad, and, by his conduct, gives you no uneasiness. I do not grudge him his holyday and am highly pleased that he kept to his time at night, and that he goes regularly to his studies. He was always very good. Indeed, when he went to London with me, I was at times out of temper last time, but it was not his fault. When I bid him goodbye, I was obliged to turn suddenly away, my heart was so full of grief at the thought of parting with him. I should be very glad to see him again before he goes if I could afford it."³³¹

331 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. February 20, 1840.

Unfortunately, Thomas Sr. will get no such opportunity.

We know that this is also a difficult blow for Elizabeth. Fewer than two weeks after young Thomas has sailed, his father writes to his mother. Again, Thomas seems to be ahead of his time in terms of perceptiveness about health, this time emotional health:

“...when you were with your family indulging in grief for the departure, for a long time and for a distant voyage, of one of your dearly cherished family, I do not fear recalling that grief to your mind, for where it is suddenly checked I think it far more injurious to the health and spirits than where it is left to take its natural course.

“I would therefore wish rather to recall it, and to acknowledge with you that it is a very severe trial for a mother to part with one of her children...”³³²

Though his father is away from home recruiting in Birmingham when Tom packs to embark on his first voyage, the young man receives preparatory instructions via father’s letters to his mother, Elizabeth. With his long military sea career, Thomas has much good guidance to share with his teenaged son. He advises on what to pack in his trunk (Man O’ War chocolate rather than sugar, for example); what he should do with his money (give it to the captain for safekeeping), and he warns Tom not to trust other sailors, many of whose characters are “gone” and who cannot therefore “get a livelihood on shore.” He urges him to find one friend on board who can “instruct him kindly in seafaring matters,” and for Tom to take every advantage and be as open to learning as possible. He also wants Thomas to work hard, and to apply the Golden Rule:

“I mean it as a general rule, not to stand as some do and say it is not my business, such people must never expect to get on in the world, they must never expect, at least, to get above mediocrity, but let a man thoroughly learn to make himself useful, and he can have his own price, he will never be at a standstill, a plenty will be glad to employ him, and he will be able to raise himself upon their shoulders, he brings himself into notice, as a clever useful man and therefore a plenty will be ready to serve him, by endeavouring to serve themselves, but above all, I recommend him to be sober, not to learn to drink out of bravado, be upright, avoid as much as possible being led into temptation, let him take the Scriptures for his

332 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. April 29, 1840.

Christian and his moral guide, and he will not do wrong, my Blessing and, above all, the Almighty's Blessing I hope he will have, but particularly mind to do as he would wish to be done by."³³³

Thomas has great faith in his namesake son, saying in the same letter to Elizabeth, "once he is a thorough navigator, he will be fit to command a ship in any part of the world..."

Thomas has also given advice to his wife in her efforts to fit their son Tom out for a life aboard ship:

"...you must not suppose that the list I sent you of Thomas' things, which he ought to have, is complete. It is only a rough calculation which may help to give you an idea. As for 6 shirts to last 3 years, it is out of the question; your own judgement will tell you better. Handkerchiefs and towels, no doubt, must be added, as well as some warm socks or stockings for cold weather, and others, a few, for warm weather. Twenty Pounds will hardly complete him, substantially, in necessaries, for 3 years, as they told him he would have to pay double for inferior articles, for what he took up abroad, from the Captain..."³³⁴

Tom goes a'whalin

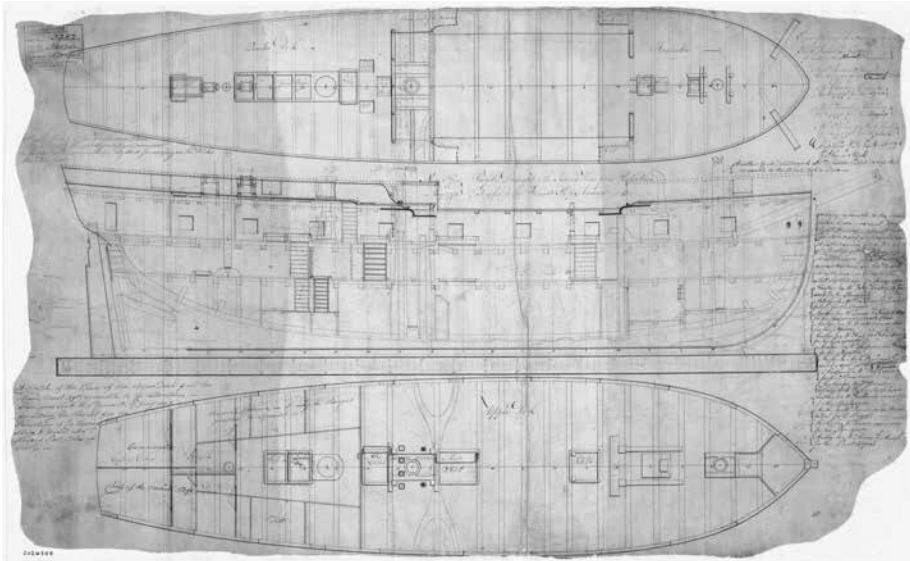
It is half past midnight on April 16, 1840, at the port at Gravesend near London, England. Sixteen-year-old Tom Waters is finally able to write a quick letter to his mother in Woolwich, Kent, before he leaves on his first sea voyage as one of four apprentices on the whaler *Barque Fawn*. He is sore and tired from a long day of work preparing the ship to embark on its journey. He has finished his watch, and writes only a short note, as he is exhausted. He says, "You must excuse this writing and mistakes if there are any as I'm rather sleepy. We took on board the livestock at about 9 o'clock."³³⁵

Tom's first voyage takes him across the Atlantic into the Indian Ocean. By October, they arrive at Batagoda, Sri Lanka, then on through the Straits of Timor where they weigh anchor and cruise for six weeks for sperm whales.

333 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Elizabeth Waters. April 20-24, 1840.

334 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters: February 8, 1840.

335 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Elizabeth Waters. April 16, 1840.

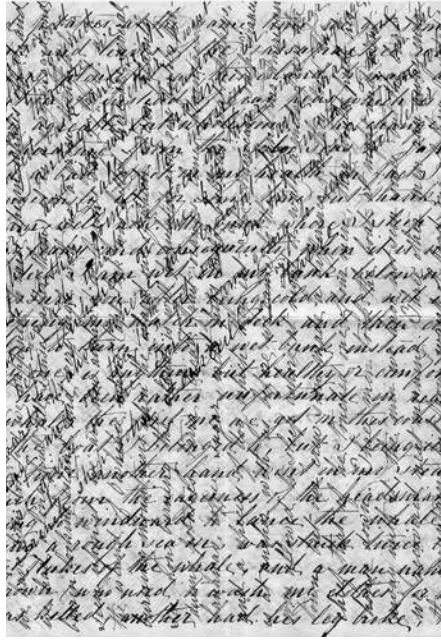


Blueprints for the design of *Barque Fawn*, the whaling ship that Thomas Waters Jr. apprenticed on in 1840. A former Navy ship, it was modified from this Cormorant class 16-gun Sloop design used for many ships. Royal Museums Greenwich. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

Then into the heart of Indonesia, in the Banda Sea, where they hunt and kill four whales. Initially, young Tom is enamored of the whaling life. He writes to his parents about his first year:

“We have been rather unfortunate in regard to whales. The first one we got on this coast was by the boat I belong to, but I being ill at the time, another hand went in my stead, which from the eagerness of the headsman going to windward to lance the whale there being a rough sea on, was struck twice by the flukes of the whale, and a man named Brown (who used to wash my clothes for me) was killed. Another had his leg broke, the boatsteerer two ribs stove in, and the headsman a blow on his back which laid him up a long time. While the other two were not hurt; the boat was smashed. Since that, the chief mate’s boat has been struck and stove by the whale, and the crew sent flying in the air, but none hurt except the mate who, in falling down, struck the shattered boat and hurt his leg and foot.

“P.S. I like whaling very well. It is very exciting being alongside of a huge whale spouting blood though, by the by, if you get any blood on your face or lips it makes them extremely sore. We have had several heavy gales off



An example of the three-way handwriting used to get the most out of a piece of paper. Black is horizontal, red is vertical, and blue is diagonal. From Tom's May 12, 1842 letter.

Japan and what was very vexing, large sperm whales within a hundred yards of us tempting us but to no purpose to fasten to them..."³³⁶

Tom also writes a colorful description to his brother John, capturing more of the drama and danger of his new-found profession:

"I like my way of life very much, plenty of excitement when fast to a whale, though rather hazardous. We have had plenty of boats stove. I have been stove myself and sent overboard with another in a trice, rough sea on, but I have improved in swimming, and I was not hurt. Three boats I have seen smashed in the space of one minute by one whale, and one boat sent clear out of the water, so that you could see between it and the water. Our boat was not stove though we were fast to the whale, but he nearly came into the boat. His head was 10 feet out of water, right over me, but the boat sheered [sic] off, and he did not hurt us. The next boat that went alongside was stove to pieces, and some of the hands nearly lost

336 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. May 12, 1842.

their lives. It was rather laughable to see 15 or 20 men flouncing about in the water, with the enraged whale knocking his flukes about in the midst of them, and our boat not being able to lend them the least assistance.”³³⁷

Life aboard a nineteenth century whaler

Capturing sperm whales for their highly commercial oil and blubber, the job of the whaling ship, was a dangerous and often deadly occupation. Industrial whaling emerged with organized fleets of whaleships in the seventeenth century, competitive national whaling industries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Tom writes several descriptions of work aboard the whaler in letters to various family members, such as this one to his parents:

“We have look-outs from the mast head every day from sunrise to sunset and you can’t imagine the scene when they cry out (a spout o)³³⁸. Everyone running about some to lower the boats and some to catch a sight of the spout; they discover whether it is a sperm whale by the manner and regularity of its spouting—a sperm whale spouts regular, and generally three times in about five minutes.”³³⁹

Whaling is exhausting, dangerous and gruesome. In the most detailed description of the chase, capture and slaughter of a sperm whale among his letters, Tom writes an eloquent and visceral description to his sister Mary:

“The quietness of the crew is disturbed by the cry from the masthead man of “*There she spouts,*” which rouses all hands from their employment. Immediately, the shrouds are crowded with the seamen, anxiously looking in the direction pointed out to them by the mastheadman. Presently the spouting of the whale is plainly seen by all hands, who join in the cry of “*There she spouts,*” keeping time with the duration of the spout. As soon as the captain has ascertained that it is a sperm whale (which he discovers by the regularity of the spoutings) he orders “*lines in the boats*”-”*Sway the*

337 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to John Waters. November 12, 1842.

338 This is likely a reference to a whale spout sighting. Often these were noted with icons or pictures in ship logs, and it’s possible Tom was referencing this in the letter in the way he would in the log.

339 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. May 28, 1840.

boats up” and when within one, two or three miles of the whale, according to the weather “*back the mainyard*” and “*lower away the boats,*” first giving the crew a lot of grog. If the whale is to leeward, they sail upon it, but when otherwise, or it’s a calm day, they row towards it, and when within half a mile of it they peak their oars, and paddle on to it, so as to make as little noise as possible.

“When alongside, the headsman or officer takes his place in the bows of the boat, ready to lance the whale, the first opportunity, the whale in its agony writhes and knocks about its flukes in a very dangerous manner, while the boat’s crew are steering with all their strength for their lives, though sometimes in vain, as men and officers are launched into the sea, and perhaps into eternity.

“Supposing no accident happens, and the whale shows fair play, and does not take to sounding or running after being lanced, it first spouts thin blood and as his wounds multiply, the blood thickens until the consistency of tar. Some whales die without spouting blood, but then they sink. When killed, all the boats tow her by the head to the ship where she is made fast by the flukes. After the boats are all hoisted up, the crew prepare to cut her in, which is done by the officers with instruments called spades. After all the blubber is on deck, they, if a small whale, hoist in the head. They then light the fires, put the blubber in the try-pots, etc.”³⁴⁰

There are on-board dangers, too, such as accidents. One morning, Tom finds the ship’s armourer dead in his bunk. He writes to his parents:

“...we have the crew of the English *Barque Rifleman* on board who with our crew are making themselves jovial or drunk over as much rack as they can drink. In the midst of them is the dead body of our armourer (who I found dead in his bunk this morning, he’s been ill some time, having broken two of his ribs by a fall in a gale of wind off Madagascar) stretched on a hatch alongside of his coffin, with a bottle of rack and a glass upon it...”³⁴¹

Tom wrote of men falling from the main topmast lee yard arm and being lucky to only break a few ribs, and this frightening incident at 1:00 a.m.:

340 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Mary Waters. November 12, 1842.

341 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. October 6, 1840.

“...The second mate roused the steward and myself up, on account of a suffocating smell of smoke, as we were sleeping in the after cabin, as the Capt was ashore. Accordingly the steward produced a light, with which we went into the pantry and saw thick smoke issuing from between the bulkhead of the sail room, upon which the 2nd Mate crawled into the sail room, and saw the fire.

“We then roused up all hands on board who were sober and stove in the bulkhead, threw water on the sails, and managed to extinguish the fire before the Captain, who had been sent for, come aboard.

“The fire is supposed to have been caused either by self combustion or from some drunken person going into the sail room with a lighted pipe, though I think the former most likely, from the appearance of the burnt sails, which I saw before the fire was extinguished. It caused a deal of extra work.”³⁴²

And there are a variety of diseases to contend with, many of which can cause lifelong debilitation, or even be fatal. Tom contracts dysentery in May 1842, and the ship doctor sends him to a hospital on the island of “Woahoo” (Oahu) for three weeks to recover. He writes months later to sister Mary: “About five days after we had been in port, I was taken bad with the dysentery, and was dangerously ill with it. It reduced me much, and made me very weak.”³⁴³

He says he is much changed by his illness and by island life:

“You would hardly know me if you was [sic] to see me now, I am rather taller, my face, arms, breast, feet, etc. have a Molatto [sic] appearance, bare footed, and merely a shirt and trousers on, and those none of the best, but though outwardly different, I am otherwise the same.”³⁴⁴

Though Tom is at first enamored of whaling, just three years later, discouraged that he hasn’t been able to learn much about seafaring after all, he decides to desert *Barque Fawn*—an action of which his father would likely not have approved. He tells his mother the story after the fact in an undated letter early in 1843. It is a harrowing account of whaling ship desertion:

“You must have heard by the Thames that I deserted the ship at Woahoo, but was caught again by a manouvre [sic], the Ship leaving port for some

342 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Mary Waters. November 20, 1842.

343 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Elizabeth Waters. November 11, 1842.

344 *ibid.*



This photo depicts the dangers of working the sails on a 19th century whaler. One false move here, one careless slip of the foot, and it's one more man lost at sea. In a heavy blow, men crawl out on the lurching mainyard to take in sail. *Making the main sail fast near Cape Horn, swaying on the footrope.* By Allan Villiers. Published in *The National Geographic Magazine*. Royal Museums Greenwich. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

days and then returning. In the meantime, I, thinking the ship had gone for good, left my hiding place in the mountains to get some sugar cane to eat, as I had not eaten anything for four days. Being very weak and hungry as I only had a cotton shirt and a pair of duck trowsers [sic] on, and was wet through the whole time from the continual rain, and was very cold, however it being very dark (11 P.M.), I missed the s. cane and in trying to return was taken by a dozen natives in search of me, and conveyed to the fort.

“Another hand who had left the ship with me, at night, we having to swim ashore about two miles and a half, was nearly drowned. I help’d him in the water several times, but at last gave him up, wind blowing fresh, for as yet we could not see the shore and I was tired. He bid me good bye, and I swam ahead, however he reached the shore but was taken by the natives as he landed.

“Why I left was on account of the second mate, who one day in port being in a bad humour said he would do his best with Capt. Dunn to stop my liberty; because I (acting then in the capacity of steward as the right one was ashore and having done all my work and all the other hands being asleep I also went to sleep as the preceding night, Sunday, the *Fawn*

had gone ashore on a reef, having dragged and foul'd her anchor, and of course had kept all hands hard at work to heave it up)(the ship received no apparent damage) did not exactly please him.

"We are bound for the Marquesas where I intend to leave the ship again as I am not comfortable aboard. Capt. Dunn is very kind to me and does all he can to make me happy, but for the last nine months he has been with a few days excepted very ill and not much on deck and of course cannot see all that passes on deck. The Chief mate Mr Williams is also very kind, in fact I am his favourite. E.Wild is like a brother and tries to persuade me to stop but now it is too late."³⁴⁵

His brother John also writes to their mother about the ordeal, giving us additional insight into the desertion attempt:

"Dear Mamma.

"I was pleased to read Tom's Letter and am glad he has written home. I think there is again hope of seeing him soon. I have enquired about him on board the *Fawn*. The Capt. speaks well of him he says he can never forget the attention Tom paid him during his illness, and the main cause of his leaving the vessel is his dislike to the trade.

"He has an inventory of the few things he left behind such as Quadrant, Dressing Case, Watch, Tablet etc. and if the owners do not dispose of them the Capt. will give them up to me. The Capt. had to pay 20 Dollars to secure Thomas after his first leaving the vessel. He dare not send his men on the island to bring him back or they would have escaped. He therefore hired some and paid them.

"It appears that Thomas very nearly lost his life on his first attempt to escape he and another lad tied a number of clothes round their body and swam in the nighttime towards the shore but before they reached it they had to dispense with their clothing. The one lad was caught directly he landed the other Escaped.

"I thought I might call at the Office and hear what they say of Tom. Thanking Ben for his trouble and kindness and hoping you are all well.

I Remain Affectionately Yours

John Waters"³⁴⁶

345 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. Elizabeth Waters. Undated, 1843.

346 Letter. John Waters to Elizabeth Waters. August 5, 1844.

Tom is perhaps lucky he has an understanding captain and when he does eventually desert a second (and successful) time, his reputation seems no less the worse for the wear. He is aware his parents disapprove and tells his mother at the end of the letter, "You may think me foolish for acting as I do especially as the voyage is nearly over. All the answer I shall give you is 'no one knows where the shoes pinch but he who wears them.'"³⁴⁷

Desertion & mutiny on whaling ships

Given the harsh and dangerous nature of whaling in the nineteenth century and the rough trade employed as sailors, trouble aboard ship was common. If a captain was not adept at people management an all-out war could break out and might be directed at the captain and his officers—akin to today's management-labor disputes. The book and multiple films of the true story,³⁴⁸ *Mutiny on the Bounty*, depict this precarious situation well.

In those days, close quarters and the potential for mutiny kept captains on the alert. They had to lead either by fear or a moral strength that inspired the men's loyalty. As far as we know, Tom Waters was to become the latter kind of captain, though perhaps he presented a less truthful version of himself to his wife and parents than might have been. It's more likely, though, given the other documentation we have from other seamen, that Tom was strong, but not vicious. Perhaps his own dissatisfaction and eventual desertion of *Barque Fawn* educated him in what kind of leader he wanted to become.

Desertion was illegal and punishable in the Marines by flogging—the standard was twelve lashes with a cat'o'nine tails whip. Under certain circumstances it could also be punishable by death, but this was much less common in the whaling industry, even though desertion was common. According to the New Bedford Whaling Museum:

"A common problem while on land was desertion; crew members would run away from the ship mid-voyage because they did not enjoy life aboard a whaling ship. Complaints included quality of food, the difficulty of the work, and homesickness. Sometimes deserters would be caught and punished, but often they got away."³⁴⁹

347 *ibid.*

348 *Mutiny on the HMS Bounty*. Found 3/29/21 at <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/mutiny-on-the-hms-bounty>.

349 *Whaling History*. Found 4/16/21 at <https://www.whalingmuseum.org/learn/research-topics/whaling-history/life-aboard/>.

After he successfully deserts *Fawn* on his second attempt in April 1843, Tom is hired on to *George Washington*, an American sperm whaling ship.

He knows his family is disappointed in his actions, but he defends himself:

“I see by your writing that my Father and in fact all think me wrong in leaving the *Fawn*. I acted according to the best of my judgment, I will give you my reason, in my indentures that I signed, it stated I was to be taught thorough practical seamanship, I remained 3 years in the *Fawn* and can truly say according to the opportunities I had in that time it would have taken twice 3 years more, before I could have said I was a seaman...

“...though I had no opportunities to learn seamanship, I had plenty to curse, swear, and drink spirits to excess, the crew that came out in the *Fawn* were bad enough, but most of them left and we had to ship worse, the refuse of other ships who cared for nothing but rum, which was served out in the ship; even while sick in *Woahoo* our doctor said I could not live much longer if I was not removed from the noise and stench of the drunken crew...

“...since leaving the *Fawn* I have sailed in none but temperance ships, the first time I shipped as O.S.³⁵⁰ on board an American ship where the mate took a liking to me on account that he saw I was willing and did my best he gave me every opportunity to learn as they were fitting the ship for home.

“The next American ship I was on board of was the *Enterprise* where I went as A.B.³⁵¹ to the entire satisfaction of her Captain and officers who gave me the name of a seaman, it is true I lost the £24 which I should have received if I had stopped in the *Fawn*, and I should have been expected to be a seaman which I should not have been and then you would have thought me wanting in abilities.

“I left my books, quadrant, watch, instruments, compass, dressing case and some clothes on board in my chest, which I hope you have received though you have not mentioned such in your letters.

“There were 4 apprentices came out in the *Fawn*, but there was only one that went home in her, and he was the fo’castle one, I was the first.”³⁵²

350 Ordinary Seaman.

351 Able-bodied Seaman.

352 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Elizabeth Waters. September 1844. No date.

Chapter 13

Elizabeth at Home, Two Toms at Sea

THOMAS SR. REMAINS IN ENGLAND from 1834 until the fall of 1840, during which time two more daughters (their last two children) are born. Jane arrives on April 10, 1838, and on August 7, 1840, with her husband still recruiting in Birmingham, forty-two-year-old Elizabeth gives birth to their tenth and last child, a daughter they will name Nancy.

Now Elizabeth's mothering skills must accommodate a range of children spanning twenty-three years. Of course, the twenty-three-year-old Mary is still at home and is a great help to her mother. Nineteen-year-old John is mostly away studying engineering and working at Miller & Ravenhill, and Thomas Jr. is at sea, but this leaves five children still at home...none of whom are yet teenagers.

Ben and Betsey, twelve and ten, are the remaining children of the middle group and baby Nancy joins the youngest set of daughters, Sarah (5) and Jane (2). Betsey and Sarah are attending Miss Borley's Academy.³⁵³

Elizabeth has found the pregnancy particularly difficult, we learn, from many clues in a lengthy letter Thomas writes in response to her just a few weeks before her delivery.

Her anxiety is further exacerbated by an unhappy servant, Ellen, whom Thomas advises she ask point blank if she will stay or go, so that Elizabeth

353 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. October 6, 1840.

will have time to find someone else before the baby is born should Ellen leave. Thomas is also concerned that this toxic domestic is infecting the children with her discontent:

“As you say that Ellen will remain with you some time longer I recommend you by all means to endeavour to put a stop to her discontented manner while she is with you, tell her at once when she talks again of going that it is of no use for her to remain any longer with you if she is dissatisfied, that you have no wish to part with her, but that if she cannot be contented where she is she had better go at once, for that you cannot put up with so much discontent, for it is only upsetting the harmony of the house by her remaining when she is not pleased, You had better caution Mary to let you know when Ellen complains or threatens to go again, for discontent you may depend upon it is infectious or as they say catching, and if you do not take care it will run through the family; I believe Mary’s dissatisfaction arises in a great measure from Ellen’s discourse, you know the proverb, “evil communication corrupts good manners”, I think you will understand my meaning. John is rather touched with discontent and there is some danger that Benjamin will be also, and Sarah requires caution, it is a disorder of the mind which demands great resolution to subdue when once it has gained a footing, and it can be overcome only by the disordered person himself.”³⁵⁴

Due to several problems with house maintenance, there are workers coming and going, which Elizabeth must also manage. There are problems with the sewer system, and the house isn’t big enough for the whole family. She writes that on her husband’s return, they will have to figure out the sleeping arrangements as there are not enough bedrooms. Thomas responds:

“I think it very likely that you may find a benefit in sleeping in the top front room, you are likely to have more pure air from over the tops of the houses in front of you but I hope Mary does not sleep in the same bed with you and if Jane did not I think it would be all the better. Mary and Sarah could sleep together in one bed and Elizabeth and Jane in another, however for that you must judge, I should like for us to have a couple of new beds in that upper front room instead of those uncomfortable old ones

354 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. July 2, 1840.

and if you saw one that you thought would suit you I wish you to buy it. Benjamin could have a bed made up in the library if you thought proper.”³⁵⁵

Elizabeth is concerned about her own health and seems upset that her doctor will not visit her before the birth. She is not only experiencing physical but emotional distress as well.

Her husband tries to reassure her, and (as always) recommends that she put her faith in God. Thomas commiserates with her and tells her he is worried to hear of her “load of troubles,” but also recognizes honestly that he can’t do much to help. He writes:

“I think seriously that if you could get a good servant, although she would cost a little more a year, it would be highly advisable. For I think it would tend very much to calm your mind which is now kept in a constant state of agitation, quite opposed to what it ought to be in your present pregnant state...”

Whether it’s because of her pregnancy and state of mind or other issues, marital issues flare up again at this time. Chagrined, Thomas writes from his recruitment post:

“It is a great misfortune when we misconceive each other’s best feelings and intentions. A misconstruction was placed on some part of one of my letters from the Mediterranean and see what an injury it did to our affections. Something I said two other weeks before I left home for this place, which was misinterpreted caused a sad to-do between us, and now after upwards of a quarter of a century married, we must be still squabbling about expressions. For you must have been long convinced, or ought to have been, of my truest love for you and sincerest affection for the children...”³⁵⁶

Notwithstanding all of Elizabeth’s challenges, she successfully gives birth to their last child, Nancy, on August 7, while Thomas is still in Birmingham. After completing his recruiting assignment, Thomas returns home to Woolwich on October 23, when he meets his three-month old daughter and enjoys a brief period of domestic life. After a leave of only five days, Thomas

355 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. June 24, 1840.

356 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. March 22, 1840.

leaves again—this time for what will be his last ship and voyage as a British Naval Marine.

Voyage of *Revenge*

On October 28, 1840, Thomas Sr. travels on *HMS Howe* to meet up with his new ship, *HMS Revenge*. He will again take up slave trade patrol—this time along the coast of Syria. His final voyage will last just over one year, and will include stops at Malta, in the Bay of Marmorice on the coast of Turkey, Suda Candia, Beirut, and Tunis.

There are a few posts describing these locales. Of course, he has been to Malta before, but others are new sights for him. It is in Marmorice on January 11, 1841, that he switches from *Howe* to *Revenge*:

“I cannot tell how long I shall be in this ship, or what they will do with me and the other eight Capts who came out the same that I did, for there appears to be nothing for us to do, now that there is peace between the Turks and the Egyptians...War seems to be pretty nearly at a close in China also, so we may expect soon to be at peace with all the world again...”³⁵⁷

They leave Marmorice on March 8, and on March 11 he writes from “Suda Candia,” which is, as he writes, “a large fertile mountainous Island anciently



HMS Revenge at Gosport in 1805. Artist, T. Robinson. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

357 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. January 17, 1841.

called Crete...”³⁵⁸ The actual name of the town is Souda, the region is Chania, and these are on the isle of Crete.

By June 11, they have sailed from Crete to Malta and have arrived in Syria at the port city of Beirut, which he spells as “Beyrout,” It is, he says:

“...a seaport town of Syria, about 35 miles from Damascus over rugged mountains and across deep ravines. Beyrout was once a considerable place for traffic between Damascus and other inland places of Syria with Europe, but it is now like all towns under Turkish dominion, more than half in ruins.

A quantity of silk is raised here, and some excellent shawls I am told are manufactured, but as the place is very subject to the Plague, Europeans are in a great measure kept in fear of purchasing any of its manufacture which is liable to imbibe contagion.”³⁵⁹

On August 28, *Revenge* arrives at the Bay of Tunis:

“We are at anchor within three miles of the Site of Old Carthage, but nothing remains to denote its celebrity and antiquity excepting ruins level with the ground, and some cisterns and vaults...”³⁶⁰

Here he pauses to ask his wife about their youngest child, Nancy, and indicates a concern common to all parents of the time: “I hope Nancy is weaned before this time and that she will not be left-handed...”³⁶¹ He had mentioned similar concerns about Betsey when she was young, and we learn that her father had also been left-handed as a child:

“I am sorry Betsey is disposed to be left handed, I know well the inconvenience, in myself and how annoying I found it in my younger days, to be left-handed; the child acquired that defect when she was learning to walk, however it will not do to attempt to remedy it by sharpness, Betsey seems to be an amiable child; I admire her aversion to dirty apparel...”³⁶²

358 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. March 11, 1841.

359 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. July 24, 1841.

360 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. September 25, 1841.

361 *ibid.* Throughout time, left-handedness has been looked upon as an indication of everything from rebelliousness to evil. For centuries young children were tortured to “re-train” them to use their right hands for all major tasks like writing, throwing and eating. This included tying the left hand behind their backs, slapping them with metal rulers when they inadvertently used the “wrong” (left) hand and other forms of humiliation and abuse. For more, see *On the Other Hand: Left Hand, Right Brain, Mental Disorder, and History*. Kushner, Howard I. Johns Hopkins Press. 2017.

362 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. July 13, 1833.

STATEMENT OF SERVICE FORThomas WATERS RM

Date of Birth	-	Not Recorded
2nd Lieutenant	-	30.11.1804
Lieutenant	-	27. 7.1808
Captain	-	22. 7.1830
To Retired List (Full Pay)	-	31.10.1844
Brevet Major	-	28.11.1854

Greenwich Hospital Pension of £50 per annum awarded 1. 6. 1877

Died at Hook, Surrey 6.12.1879 in his 99th year.(Obituary "Times" 10.12.1879)

Where Served

Portsmouth HQ		2. 12.1804
HMS REGULUS North Sea, off Boulogne and on the	3. 5.1804	
Portsmouth HQ	Guernsey Stat.	10. 7.1807
HMS SWIFTSURE North American Stat.	5. 11.1807	
Little Ireland, Bermuda as Commandant	10. 1.1810	
Woolwich HQ	12. 4.1811	
Recruiting at Rochdale and Macclesfield	1. 8.1812	
Half Pay	4. 8.1814	
Portsmouth HQ	1. 1.1816	
Half Pay	16. 2.1817	
Woolwich HQ	12. 3.1823	
HMS MAIDSTONE Coast of Guinea for the prevention of the slave trade.	8. 1.1824	
Woolwich HQ	22. 9.1827	
HMS BARIAM Channel and Mediterranean	27. 3.1831	
Woolwich HQ	3. 5.1834	
Recruiting Newark	16. 7.1836	
Woolwich HQ	6.11.1836	
Recruiting Birmingham	1. 2.1840	
Woolwich HQ	23. 10.1840	
HMS HOWE Supernumerary for coast of Syria	28. 10.1840	
HMS REVENGE Coast of Syria	12. 1.1841	
Woolwich HQ	27. 2.1842	
Recruiting Hertford	14. 7.1842	
Woolwich HQ	28. 10.1842 - 31.10.1844	

Thomas Waters Sr.'s Statement of Service, the record of his career in the Royal Marines.

Sea-going days end for Thomas Sr.

On February 27, 1842, the elder Thomas returns home for the final time. After four and a half months at home, he is sent on a three-month recruitment mission to Hertford on July 14, about forty miles from Woolwich. For the first time, as far as we know, Elizabeth and family can visit Thomas somewhere away from home. Near August 18, they come to Bull Plain, Hertford, where Thomas is living.

By mid-September, the family has returned, and Thomas seems to already miss his wife's company:

“I missed your society, you may be assured, on my return after seeing you off, particularly at my tea, and after tea on my taking my walk up the grove, but I had the consolation of hoping that you were comfortably in the midst of our young family, and consequently the change would not be so gloomy to you...”³⁶³

Thomas returns to Woolwich on October 28, 1842 and spends the next two years conducting recruitment activities at Hertford. On October 31, 1844, Thomas retires at age sixty-three, and is moved to the Retired List (Full Pay).³⁶⁴ Elizabeth is forty-seven.

Thomas Jr. is well-traveled

By the tender age of twenty-one, Thomas Jr. has already traveled from the Indian Ocean to New Guinea, into the China seas, past the coast of Japan, and into Byron's Bay at the island of “Owhihee” (Kealekekua Bay, Hawaii), where the infamous Captain Cook had been killed sixty-two years before in 1779. He has also witnessed the many injuries and deaths all too common in whaling. In December 1842, one man is killed and five are badly hurt chasing sperm whales off the Coast of Japan.³⁶⁵

By the spring of 1843 when Tom deserts, they are moored off the Marquesa Isles. How strange the people of the islands must have seemed to a young Englishman:

363 Letter. Thomas Waters Sr. to Elizabeth Waters. September 13, 1833.

364 *Statement of Service*. Royal Marines.

365 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Amy Waters. December 29, 1861.

“We are now laying off and on the Marquese IIs. I have been ashore at one of them trading for hogs. They are the worst looking natives that I ever saw. They tattoo themselves, even to the lips and eyebrows. The men are a dark copper color the women nearly white and some good looking and fine made. They have no clothes but a couple of leaves.

“They are cannables [sic] eating all they kill or take prisoners in war. They live in valleys in tribes and each valley or tribe is perpetually at war with others. We were armed with cutlasses and musquets. We bought plenty of hogs, cocoa nuts, bananas, plaintains, breadfruit, etc.

“This morning for breakfast I had a hot breadfruit, the milk of half a dozen cocoa nuts and a pound of pork chops. A week ago I had for breakfast a drink of stinking water and a half of a hard and bad biscuit. It’s either a feast or a famine aboard S. Seamen.³⁶⁶ When we have plenty, we feast and waste while it lasts and when there is no more we think of the next port.”³⁶⁷

By Christmas of 1843, Tom has completed an eventful eight-month tour of the South Pacific on *George Washington*. He writes his mother from Talcahuana, Chili, a port well known to American whalships of the nineteenth century. They often put in there for fresh water, food, and various forms of entertainment for the crews. It’s also famous for other reasons.³⁶⁸

He tells his mother:

“All the officers with the Captain like me very much and want me to ship again for the passage home to the United States. The Captain and Chief mate are both from Nantucket, noted for the greatest whalers in the world. They both have offered me several times if I will go home with them a boatsteerer’s berth but I refused their offers as I do not like whaling.”³⁶⁹

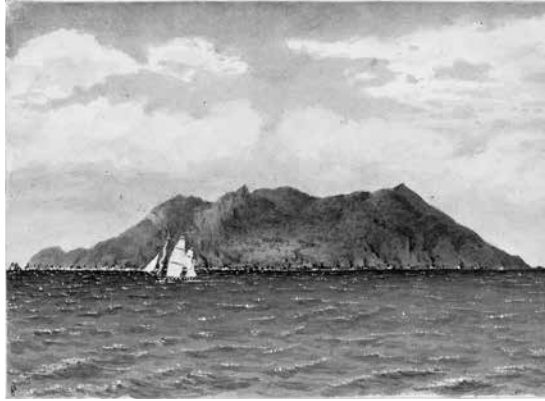
From there, the ship travels more than 3,000 nautical miles to the Pitcairn Islands, one of the world’s most remote island groups, which *Bounty* mutineers had made their home following their escape in 1789. Their leaders Christian

366 A “South-Seaman” was a vessel trading in the South Pacific Ocean. *Definition of “South-Seaman.”* Lexico, Oxford University website. Found 3/29/21 at <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/south-seaman>.

367 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Elizabeth Waters. Early 1843. Undated.

368 Talcahuana featured prominently in Miles Smeeton’s book *Once Is Enough*, a sailor’s classic. It is mentioned by the character Charlie Marlow in Joseph Conrad’s book *Lord Jim*, and a chapter of *In Search of the Castaways* by Jules Verne is set in its bay.

369 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Elizabeth Waters. Christmas 1843. No date.



A hand-painted postcard from August 12, 1849 depicting Pitcairn Island.
From Admiral Edward Gennys Fanshawe. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

Fletcher and John Adams and other crew, along with Polynesian women who had come with them from Tahiti, bore children, most of whose descendants to this day can trace their lineage back to one of the two men.

Tom writes of his two visits to the island, once when he went ashore:

“It is a rugged looking island containing about 120 inhabitants, the offspring of the mutineers of *Bounty*, but one of the old settlers is living and that one is a woman, a native of Otaheite. I went to their burying ground and saw the gravestone of John Adams...”³⁷⁰

New start in the New World

In July 1844, Tom writes to his parents with a great deal of news. He hasn't heard from them since 1840, though he does mention receiving letters from siblings in November 1842, so he was probably updated on his parents' lives through his brothers and sisters. Not only does he catch them up on his past six months of serving on several ships (including the schooner *Two Brothers*, which was damaged in a 'Norther and returned to port, and then *Telescope*, to unsuccessfully hunt humpback whales) but he also announces his arrival on the ship *Enterprise* in Nantucket, Massachusetts, across the pond, in the New World of America.

370 *ibid.*

Tom had left Talcauana in *Enterprise*, before which, he writes:

“I had been in a Chilian barque where I unfortunately got my leg hurt so badly that I could not work and was therefore sent adrift ashore to cure it and live how I could. An old Indian woman undertook to cure it; she said the bone was broke and put me to great pain but however my leg is well now, though it pains me sometimes...”³⁷¹

By September 1844, Tom is having a hard time finding work that would allow him to return to England to visit family:

“Merchant captains do not like whalemens as generally they are bad sailors and worse characters. Yankee captains do not like Englishmen. The first chance to ship I get I mean to take, whether to England or the E. Indies or any other part of the world: At all events I am clear of that chance work whaling.”³⁷²

He is in New York City boarding at Capt. Roland Gelston’s Sailors Home on “the Temperance system” with ninety-three other seamen. The Temperance system was a series of independent homes, often funded by prominent shipowners, for sailors who could not get work on a ship. The homes were the brainchild of the American Seamen’s Friend Society, founded in 1826 in Boston by Lyman Beecher and a group of congregational ministers.³⁷³

The homes stretched up and down the Atlantic coast of the United States in the port cities, and indeed in ports around the world. Their purpose was to be a “lighthouse lifting its head above the surrounding darkness, prominently [leading] the way in bringing the mariners into the desired haven.” Their goal, ever so moral and righteous, was to save seamen “from ruin the wayward” and encouraging the “virtuous in the ways of well-doing.”³⁷⁴ Most likely his parents approved of such a situation for their son.

Tom is getting desperate; he even considers a five or six-year-long trip to China to smuggle opium (like his brother Joseph had done):

371 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. July 5, 1844.

372 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. September 1844. No date.

373 *Boston Seaman’s Friend Society*. Found 3/8/21 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boston_Seaman%27s_Friend_Society#:~:text=History,-19th%20century,Friend%20Society%20incorporated%20in%201829.

374 *Nineteenth Annual Report. The Sailor’s Magazine*. Volume XIX, No. 10. June 1847. P. 292.

“You mention not to go in a smuggler. The one I first intended going into China sailed about 3 weeks ago but I could not get to Boston to ship in her. But since that the captain and owner of a small schooner of 42 tons, being in debt and fearing his creditors would seize his craft, intended clearing off to the coast of Brazil and commence smuggling and so round the Horn to Chile and Peru and I, rather than be forced to go whaling again for 4 years, had promised to go with him for good pay and a share in the proceeds, for of two evils I chose the least but I disappointed him sadly and he sailed without me the next day after receiving your letter...”³⁷⁵

Tom has finally given up whaling, but his options are otherwise limited and until he gets work, he is basically a prisoner of circumstance. He describes the predicament:

“I have given up whaling altogether as it is too uncertain for in twelve months hard work dirty and dangerous living among outcasts of every nation and liable to ill usage without redress, though fortunately I have been used well, I have received about twenty dollars which I have paid for boarding and clothing which are dear this side of the water.

“No other ships but whalers belong to this port or island. There are small sloops which run to New York and Boston, charge five dollars passage, but I was not paid off till I had been one week ashore and all I received was \$5.50 equal to about £1.5s, out of which I had to pay \$3 for board per week.

“There is an understanding between the ship owners and boarding Masters—one gets the money and the other gets the man. You cannot get off the island without cash and they cannot fit their whale-ships without men and as whaling is a poor business to all but the owners and masters, it is a hard matter to get men without force or deception, both of which are used common here.

“Though the Americans boast of better laws and government than Old England, they certainly have plenty of law and cheap but little justice. If possible, I mean to get off, but I am afraid I cannot as I have no money and am a trifle in debt having been three weeks on the island. In a short time, I expect to be forced on a 4-year voyage, without I get off the island soon.”³⁷⁶

375 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. September 1844. No date.

376 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Elizabeth Waters. July 5, 1844.

Tom's parents were likely worried about losing another son to an opium-smuggling operation, so they must have been relieved when they received this letter:

"You need not fear me going in a smuggler; the one I had engaged to go in has never been seen or heard of since. She most likely foundered and all hands must have found a seaman's grave. I should never have undertaken to go in her if I had not been hard up, without a penny in my pocket or a second shirt to my name, and that was my only chance. I believe with you that honesty is the best policy but still sailors do not think it dishonest, though unlawful."³⁷⁷

At the writing of this letter, Tom had just returned eleven days earlier on November 26, 1844, from a dangerous trip along the North American coast on a Baltimore packet, *Traffic*, with Danish Captain William Thompson. He writes:

"The incident was this. One night, or rather one morning, we hove up our anchor from an insecure place under the lee of Cape May where we had been anchored safe from a heavy North Easter, but unsafe from a coming North Wester, and we had to pass a point which is rather dangerous from the rocky shoals and heavy breakers and just as we got off the point, we struck a sunken wreck so hard that it threw us all down; all hands were on the deck and the Captain was at the helm, and he exclaimed, *O God, we are all lost*, and indeed if the ship had been built of anything but good solid live oak, in all probabilities Davy Jones would have had some more hands in his locker, for unfortunately our only boat was stove, and if it had not, it would have been useless, as the sea ran too high for any but a whale or lifeboat to live in.

"However our ship is snugly moored in port, with our jib boom pointed at a third story window, and I am down below with your letter in one hand, and a pipe in the other, a hard day's work done, a few dollars due to me which will go for clothes, and as the Yankee's say; I guess I am pretty considerable happy..."³⁷⁸

The coastal waters along the North American Atlantic seaboard are particularly notorious for bad storms as illustrated above, and there are numerous descriptions

377 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. December 6, 1844.

378 *ibid* 5.

among Tom's letters. He is moving up in the ranks of seamen and obviously is good at his job, according to reports from Captain Thompson:

“Your son Thomas Waters has been two trips with me in one of the Baltimore packets and I can say that he is a fine sober industrious and good sailor. As I have better prospects, I have left the packet and by my recommendation the owners have took him as Chief Mate. I am about buying a Vessel, and then I want him to go with me.”³⁷⁹

Without more sailing work, Tom is drafted at Christmas to shovel snow from railway track on Staten Island in New York—another dull but safe holiday for the young adventurer. At some point he must get work, because on May 3, 1845, he leaves a brig in New Orleans and waits four weeks for a ship. Finally on May 31, Tom sails on *Metoka*, a large American ship from New York, with Captain M'Larne. From here he must serve on *Metoka* until July 17, when he finally arrives back on English soil, at Prince's Dock, in Liverpool.

379 Letter. Captain William Thompson to Elizabeth Waters. December 6, 1844.

Chapter 14

A Governess & a Grocer

IT'S BEEN NEARLY FIVE YEARS since Tom left home to go whaling. He has grown into a man and become more of a Thomas than a Tom. Finally, on July 17, 1845, Thomas Jr. arrives in Prince's Dock, Liverpool on *Metoka*. He attempts, and must succeed, in getting a discharge from the ship to visit his parents. But he will visit them at a different home, in a different town.

The family has just moved a month before Thomas' arrival, on June 9, 1845, from King Street in Woolwich to Surbiton Hill, Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey. This is often referred to in letters as "Hook," and it's likely these two very close villages were considered the same. The arrival of the railway there in 1836 had spurred building development to the south of town, creating the new town of Surbiton, an ancient and pretty parish near the Thames and the former court of King Henry VIII, Hampton Court palace.³⁸⁰ Surbiton is a small but thriving town of markets, mills and fisheries. The junction of the Hogsmill and the Thames rivers along with numerous gardens make it a picturesque town.

The two youngest siblings, Nancy and Jane, will grow up in quite a different world from their older brothers and sisters. It is a more gracious life in Hook, which seems to center around a bucolic garden with a mushroom field, green peas, horseradish, strawberries, sage, thyme and a mulberry tree, marigolds, sweet peas and mignonette.³⁸¹

380 *The Victoria History of the County of Surrey*. Vol. 3. Found 1/21/2021 at https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Page:The_Victoria_History_of_the_County_of_Surrey_Volume_3.djvu/656.

381 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. March 7, 1870.



A 1901 picture of Thomas and Elizabeth's great granddaughter Charlotte Gilpin taken in the garden at Hook. Courtesy Admiral Museum Digby.

Governess Mary & Grocer Ben

While their brother has been away, the young Waters adults are making their own way. Mary, 28, appears to be at home, though late in 1845 she applies to become a governess. She receives patronage assistance for this position from the family's old friend, Mrs. Nicolls:

“My Dear Mary

“I have just heard that a governess will be wanted at the Hans Towns School of industry, after Christmas, the Salery [sic] is either £20 or 25 a year with board and lodging in the School, which is I am told a most comfortable place If you would like to apply for this situation you must lose no time in doing so as it will be necessary for you to come to London and place yourself under training for a month or so to learn the place.

“Should you make up your mind to apply for the situation you must write a letter to the Committee expressing your wish to become Governess, stating that you are a member of the Church of England, and referring to Colonel Nicolls and myself and any other friends you choose to certify your respectability. Your letter should reach the Committee on Tuesday next if possible, or if you could come up to Town on that day I would go with you to the place. Let me hear by return of post what you intend doing and if you come to Town come to Mr. Allison's, 29 Berners Street Oxford Street where I will meet you at eleven o'clock on Tuesday provided you write to say you are coming. You had better write a letter and bring

it with you to present. At all events let me hear what you mean to do. I write in great haste to save the post.

“Yours truly
Ellen Nicolls

You would be required to join the School about the middle of next month (January)”³⁸²

It’s likely Mary takes this post but being away from home for the first time in her life, she might be homesick. That summer, Thomas Jr. writes: “I hope Mary likes her new home and prospects. It is an honourable occupation and I know she will succeed. Mary will get used to her new home.”³⁸³

By age sixteen, in November 1844, Ben is apprenticed to a grocer called Benjamin Bake on Chester Street in Birkenhead, near Liverpool and his mother’s native Lancashire.³⁸⁴ He is there when Tom’s ship arrives in Liverpool in 1845 and they travel to Rochdale where they meet up with John, who is apparently visiting their Uncle Joseph Butterworth:

“Thomas & Benjamin have just arrived here he has written to King St. not thinking we had removed and intends taking Railway as soon as possible Aunt will not let him go this evening and I almost fear tomorrow altho [sic] he wishes much to see you all. He looks very well indeed...

“I should like to return with him but as I am now so far North for the benefit of my health I think I had better remain a few days longer.

“Dear Benjamin looks poorly...”³⁸⁵

When Thomas finally gets home, he will meet for the first time his youngest sibling, Nancy, who is already five years old. Elizabeth is now fifteen, Sarah is ten, and Jane is seven.

It’s unclear from the letters how long Thomas visits his parents, but we do know he has left by November 22, when he sails to New York.

Elizabeth gives Tom four shillings when he leaves. These four shillings turn out to be crucial following a shipwreck:

382 Letter. Mrs. Ellen Nicolls to Mary Waters. December 5, 1845.

383 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. July 20, 1846.

384 *The Waters Family, Volume. IV*. Turvey, Sheila. P. 15.

385 Letter. John Waters to Elizabeth Waters. July 19, 1845.

“It is rather curious that out of £15 which I had in my chest I only saved 4 shillings which happened to be in my dressing case they were the same shillings which mama gave me when I was bidding good bye the last time in the front garden to pay the fare up to London that I might not break my gold but I kept them for keepsake ever since and now they help’d me when most in want.”³⁸⁶

Thomas arrives in New York on November 29, 1845, but is immediately ready to get back to sea—only two days later, he signs articles on board *Rochester* and in two more, on December 3, he sails for Baltimore:

“I only stop’d Sunday ashore, for I took the first chance good or bad that offered. I am right down sick of the shore for a little time at any rate, and I feel twice as well writing now this letter in a vessel’s cabin than I did in London with bricks and mortar over my head.”³⁸⁷

In the same letter, Thomas is hoping for a letter from his parents and an uncle to cheer him up for the holidays. He says, “you promised me one [a letter] for this Xmas. If I get one from You and Uncle at that time I shall think that my salt beef and duff is roast beef and plum pudding of Old England.”³⁸⁸

But a happy Christmas is not in the stars for Thomas.

386 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. August 31, 1846.

387 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. December 11, 1845.

388 *ibid.*

Chapter 15

A Cartload of Coffins for Christmas

“**T**HE CAPTAIN IS DEAD, and a cartload of coffins in sight for Christmas boxes,” Thomas Jr. will write later about his Christmas in Baltimore in 1845.³⁸⁹ After returning from his family visit in England, Thomas had fallen sick with the dreaded smallpox—the deadly, contagious virus that left survivors scarred and often blind. A vaccine had been developed in 1796, but the disease still ravaged populations around the world through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.³⁹⁰ For whatever reason (it certainly wasn’t because of the care he and others received), Thomas survives his illness. It could be because he had a mild form; he writes that he was not as sick as many others:

“I have had the small pox, and that my Captain died of it or of the Hospital usage, I am doubtful of which. The small pox hospital where the Captain and I were sent is a long way from the town and is left entirely to the care of a Dutchman and his wife. Once a week or fortnight it is visited by some young doctor’s student who takes care to keep at a respectful distance from the sick. I liked the doctor. For one thing, he never ordered me a dose of

389 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Amy (Dakin) Waters. December 29, 1861.

390 *Smallpox*, Vocabulary.com website. Found 3/21/21 at <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/smallpox>.

physic³⁹¹ or any of the rest in my room. He used to take the Dutchman's account of the whites who died. He used to cut a notch on a stick to mark one, but as to the blacks who died, he would make a rough guess at them. When I see home again I'll spin you a long twister about it."³⁹²

A lengthy and grim report of one of his most miserable Christmases (and he had many, both at sea and on land) follows in the fall of that year. Calling it his "winter residence," Thomas gives a riveting account of what it was like to be sick in a smallpox hospital in the nineteenth century in America, for both whites and blacks:

"It [the hospital] was first built to accommodate the Yellow Fever, and four acres graveyard around it shews strong evidence of the fatality of the gold colour'd disease. Afterwards, on the increase of Small pox, it was used for that purpose, and for the last 10 or 12 years has not wanted tenants. It is kept by a Dutchman and his wife who are sole managers, and who are so used to the sufferings of the human kind, that they think nothing of increasing them by their usage and neglect. A high board fence surrounds the whole.

"In walking through the grave yard, where no stone tells the passing stranger who lies beneath, may be seen large square places sunk below the level: it is where the dead were thrown in by cartloads. Sprinkle a few skull and other bones with a scattering of all kinds of clothing with here and there a black burnt spot where the clothes of those affected have been



The hospital Thomas is possibly referring to is the Marine Hospital at Hawkins Point, part of the Quarantine Station. U.S. National Library of Medicine. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

391 A laxative to relieve constipation.

392 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. July 20, 1846.

burnt, and you will have a view, such as I had of the Hospital yard—not a very pleasant sight to the sick.

“I forgot the black coach and hearse with some large spare coffins made to suit all sizes six feet long. I did not see any the size of me, but the Dutchman said a small man would go in a large coffin. They keep a cow in the grave yard, very sick when I was there, the milk of which goes to the establishment.

“The lower part of the Hospital is used by the aforesaid Dutchman and wife, the middle part by the whites, and the upper part by the blacks, who are held in slavery here. The blacks are used most shamefully; we could hear them screeching [sic] in the dead room, which was the next room over ours where those who are not likely to recover are shut up to die, no fire or bed, in fact with nothing. Complete murder, but they are considered dogs in this country. The student visited us twice while I was there.

“I was not very sick myself in comparison with the others, and I had a row the second day with the Dutchman, and threatened to report him. Our room was large and cold snow was on the ground. Not a bit of fire would the Dutchman light, except when he expected the visit from Mr. Physic. He told me he did not care for me, but I saw that he did, for after that we always had a fire. He never gave me any occasion to growl after that for he and his wife were quite kind to me.

“Brandy is very useful in the disease. At least it was ordered by Mr. P. to some, and two or three times a day he would bring in a good horn, and after a little time when I could walk, he got me a pipe and tobacco, things not used in the hospital, but very acceptable to me. He was soft soaping me; I could go into the kitchen when I liked and all over the hospital so that I was as comfortable as could be.

“They had an easy plan to get the dead bodies from the top rooms to the door below—the Dutchman would drag the empty coffin up the staircase put the dead in and then give it a shove and down it with its cargo would come. Sometimes it would fetch up at the bottom with such a jerk that the top would burst off and pitch the body out. It would not do for me to describe the filth and smell, but I know I have eat [sic] more than a peck of dirt besides what I swallowed without eating so my allowance of that article is done for.”³⁹³

Thomas comes away from the hospital with little left in terms of personal possessions. He must replace his clothing, which, along with the new blankets and a quilt given to him by John on his trip home, have been burnt at the smallpox hospital to prevent spreading the virus. And he still needs to replace the sailing gear he left aboard *Barque Fawn* when he deserted—his chest, quadrant, spyglass and other items.

Back to Nova Scotia

After his recovery from smallpox, Thomas is introduced to the region he will come to love. On April 21, 1846, at age twenty-three, he arrives in the port at St. John's, Newfoundland. He has had a rough passage there, spending three days in ice, surrounded by "icebergs three times as high as mastheads"—a "splendid sight."³⁹⁴ Twenty-five vessels had been lost there in the past month: "One iceberg is about the bigness of Greenwich Hospital." Another iceberg that his ship strikes but survives is "as big as a mountain." "I would rather be anywhere than among them at night time," he says.³⁹⁵

He is happy working in Nova Scotia where he seems to continue to work on the coastal ships, and it agrees with him, body and soul:

"I am considerable stouter than when I left and enjoy very good health. The healthy climate of Nova Scotia and cold weather agrees with me now I have plenty of suitable clothes."³⁹⁶

Yet during that summer he longs for more letters from home, and describes the state of mind so peculiar to the seaman—that longing for home, but most happy at sea:

"If I could only get all the letters promised me I would never be disappointed, but when I arrive at the vessels homeward bound port and see all my shipmates welcomed home by their friends and relations and me left alone like a stray sheep and then find no letter at the house for me to show remembrance from my friends and relations, why then I feel indeed alone and wish again to be out on the sea with no land in sight. It is the only part of a sailors [sic] life that is sad.

394 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. April 26, 1846.

395 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. July 29, 1846.

396 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. July 20, 1846.

“When I get a letter, I don’t care a straw; I get into the cabin the same as I am now, haul out all my old letters and new ones and begin a letter home, then read a little of my own from you, smoke a cigar and feel, although alone, as if surrounded by friends and then I want for nothing.

“However, a sailors life is the best, yet it is always changing, up and down, fine weather and foul. The land is very well for a day or week, but after that I feel dead and long to be away again on blue water.”³⁹⁷

On his coastal packet ship duties over the next two years, Thomas works hard, and thinks about the prospect of putting down roots in Nova Scotia:

“There certainly is some fine beautiful places here in Nova Scotia. The land is very cheap, but it would take some time and labour or money to clear it and build a house. Not less than two hundred pounds, at least fifty, would do, but then it would be hard work and would be some time before you could get fairly comfortable.”³⁹⁸

He even invites brothers John and Ben to join him and imagines them starting a family farm together. He writes to his mother, “I hope John’s health has improved. The climate of Nova Scotia would suit him, that is, if he took to farming. He would not make much money but he would preserve his health.”³⁹⁹

On Sunday, May 17, Thomas’ ship anchors at Sydney, Cape Breton Island where he encounters the local natives, who would have been Mi’kmaq: “I went ashore today up to the Indian camp and I rested in their wigwams. It is very pleasant in summer, but it must be cold in winter for them.”⁴⁰⁰

On June 25, he writes of the tough economic times for the shipping trade due to present and brewing wars for the United States:

“Shipping is very dull in the United States on account of the expectation of war with England and the present war with Mexico. We have a good freight of flour offered us to carry to Mexico but then we would have to run the blockade and all the chances of being taken by the Americans for doing so. I belong to a British Colonist vessel, so you see I fly English colors again.”⁴⁰¹

397 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. October 1, 1846.

398 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. July 20, 1846.

399 *ibid.*

400 *ibid.*

401 *ibid.*

Mexican American War

The United States was at that time embroiled in land struggles with Mexico that would last for two years and become known as the Mexican American War. On May 12, 1846, the United States Senate voted 40–2 to go to war with Mexico. President James K. Polk had accused Mexican troops of having attacked Americans on U.S. soil, north of the Rio Grande. But Mexico claimed this land as its own territory and accused the American military of having invaded.⁴⁰² The war officially ended with the February 2, 1848, signing in Mexico of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The treaty added an additional 525,000 square miles to United States territory, including the land that makes up all or parts of present-day Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming.⁴⁰³

In August, Thomas writes again from Pictou, and seems particularly enamoured with the quantity and variety of berries available in Nova Scotia:

“I am on the Nova Scotia coast now and it would astonish you to see the quantity of wild berries of all descriptions that grow here. I will just mention a few; recollect they all grow wild: raspberries straw b. goose b. cran b. huckle b. blue b. black b. partridge b. maidenhair b. bunch b. heath b. bake apple b. witherod b. pear b. and currants, black and red, all of which I have pick’d and eaten. In fact I have seen them, raspberries especially, thicker than you would imagine and very fine. I have sat in one spot and eat berries till I was tired and there would be plenty left then.

“I think you would like this country. If ever I live ashore it will be my choice. I wish I could get a grant of land in case of accidents to any of my limbs.”⁴⁰⁴

As he’s getting older and encountering all the dangers of the foggy, rocky coastal waters, Thomas is clearly thinking of a back-up plan in case he’s injured. After witnessing serious shipwrecks in August, one of which killed thirty-eight people (“we pass’d two of the bodies, female, they had not time to get into

402 *U.S. Senate: The Senate Votes for War against Mexico*. US Senate.com. Found 3/26/21 at <https://tinyurl.com/3ef2t6pj>.

403 *Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo*. History.com. Found 3/26/21 at <https://www.history.com/topics/mexican-american-war/treaty-of-guadalupe-hidalgo>.

404 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. August 31, 1846.

their boat before she went down...⁴⁰⁵), he is nearly killed himself. Here is his account of that harrowing Friday, August 7, 1846, which began in the early morning hours:

“[At] 2 o’clock in the morning, in a heavy storm raining with thunder and lightning scudding under our foresail I, as mate having charge of the watch on deck, happened to go to leeward and look on our lee bow, when a vivid flash of lightning shewed me the white foaming breakers and black headed rocks just above water ahead and to leeward, not a ship’s length off.

“I jump’d to the helm and put it hard down and call’d the Capt and all hands. The Capt sprang up and was standing by me holding the helm down. I thought she would clear them when a heavy sea dash’d her upon the rocks. We cut our long boat loose immediately and with great exertions succeeded in hoisting her over the side of the breakers sweeping over us and throwing live fish on our decks and our poor vessel’s ribs and timbers crashing at every thump.

“We were deeply loaded and knew that in a few minutes she would be in pieces. 5 or 6 minutes after we struck we were in our long boat and in 2 minutes more our vessel broke in two and went down the rocks into deep water and sunk.

“I got badly jamb’d and nearly kill’d by a sea striking the boat when we had her hoisted up to get her over the side and sent her to leeward and caught me between the rail and nearly stove my ribs in, if not quite, for I am not sure. I spit blood badly and can hardly bend or draw my breath. I have not been to a doctor and don’t calculate to go. I shall soon be well, though, so you need not be uneasy.

“I lost nearly everything. I went down the cabin once after she struck as it was my duty to save my log book to secure the insurance in case we got saved, and I got my watch and one armfull [sic] of cloaths [sic] out of my chest which was lash’d and covered with water which was up to my armpits.

The things I saved I will mention. Dressing case, blue jacket & trousers, pistols, epitome and log book...all the rest went to the bottom. The Capt did not even save his watch which was hanging up not far from mine in the cabin. All hands and the Capt were in the long boat when I got from the cabin with my things and I had to jump quick or they would have shoved off.

“It is rather curious that out of £15 which I had in my chest I only saved 4 shillings which happened to be in my dressing case. They were the same shillings which mama gave me when I was bidding good bye the last time in the front garden to pay the fare up to London that I might not break my gold. But I kept them for keepsake ever since and now they help’d me when most in want.

“I have lost a great deal by the wreck for I had fitted myself with everything needful and had 15£ to spare in my chest besides 12£ more due to me which I will not get. I am pretty hare now. We arrived in St. Mary at daylight and when we told the fishermen where we had struck they could hardly believe us for they said many vessels had been lost on that rock, but no lives were ever known to have been saved in Halifax. We were reported all lost.

“No blame whatever is attached to me and I am now mate again with the same Capt in a larger vessel called the Gipsy of Halifax...”⁴⁰⁶

Even this very close call doesn’t change Thomas’ mind about a seafaring life, but it does show that he recognizes the dangers: “I like the sea just as well as ever, only not the rocks, especially sunken ones.”⁴⁰⁷

Sad times in England

In September, while aboard *Gipsy* in the port of New York, Thomas decides to write directly to his brother John to see if he is interested in moving to Nova Scotia. He knows that John has been very sick with consumption (tuberculosis), and maybe he believes that giving his brother something exciting to look forward to might help him recover:

“Hoping with all my heart that you are quite well from your severe illness which I only knew of yesterday when I received your letters, very acceptable, I assure you. Health above all things, and well I know it is the greatest blessing that can be bestowed upon us, and fortunately I have very good at present never better, which I think is partly owing to plenty of open air, exercise and salt water duckings. How would you like one hundred acres of wild land, and a nice little cottage with a quiet but hard working farmer’s life and good health to boot?”⁴⁰⁸

406 *ibid.*

407 *ibid.*

408 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to John Waters. September 27, 1846.

Later in the letter it's clear Thomas knows his brother might not survive: "A life among strangers makes me doubly feel the value of parents and brothers and sisters, still more so when in danger of losing one..."⁴⁰⁹

In November he receives a response from John. In what will be John's last letter to his brother, it is clear the twenty-six-year-old is having to face his mortality:

"I am very poorly altho' I feel daily to be gaining renewed strength. It is probable that I may now recover. I can walk about twice the length of our garden. I was first attacked with hemorrhage, vomiting quantities of blood which occurred nearly 7 weeks ago. I then kept my bed for a fortnight (nearly) and soon after removed to this place⁴¹⁰. I have since suffered a relapse, it brings me so extremely low and weak as to deprive me of my voice and disables me to move even on either of my sides. With this attack I have nearly kept my bed the remaining part of the 7 weeks. Do not be alarmed if I say I anticipate these frequent attacks until I am removed hence to be no more here. My hands are very thin, my legs will scarcely support me without the help of a stick. I live chiefly upon milk and other nutritious food. All my goods are coming from London to this place. Papa does not contemplate my return of strength for 12 months. Ah, it may never again return..."⁴¹¹

Sadly, John does not recover, and dies less than two months later on January 27, 1847, at his parents' home in Kingston, Surrey. He is buried in the Friends Meeting House yard at Kingston. Thomas Sr. and Elizabeth must again go through the grief and mourning process for another child.

John had been a serious, devout Quaker who was respected and loved by his Quaker friends. In a family scrapbook are hand-transcribed copies of elegiac poems written by a friend of John's, a T.A. Crow. They had clearly been close. From one poem, composed of five ten-line stanzas, we learn much about the kind of man John Waters was:

"He is not dead but sleepeth
while true affection weepeth,
In sorrow o'er his bier

409 *ibid.*

410 John has returned to the house at Woolwich so his parents can look after him.

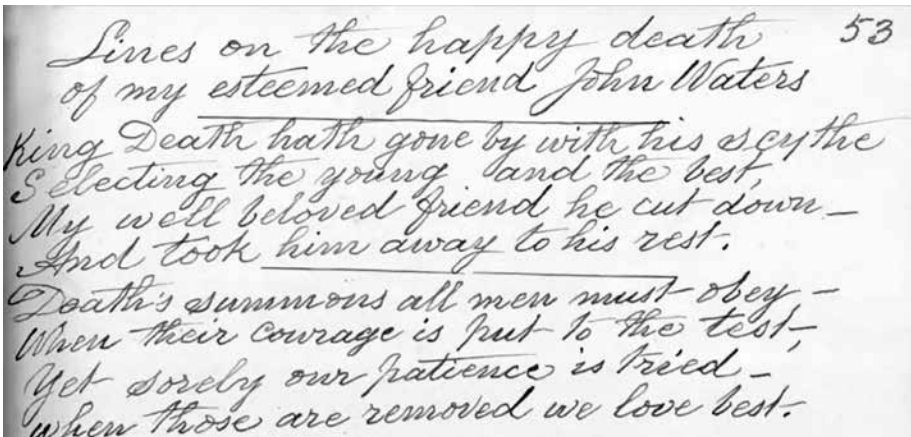
411 Letter. John Waters to Thomas Waters Jr. November 23, 1846.

The loss of one so dear
How fond doth memory trace
Each feature of his face.
His gentle voice and pleasing smile
Would every friend with love beguile
As oft we met to kindly plan
Some useful scheme to better man..."⁴¹²

A second poem composed of sixteen four-line stanzas eulogizes John further:

"King Death hath gone by with his scythe
Selecting the young and the best,
My well beloved friend he cut down
And took him away to his rest..."

"I remember thy zeal to do good
And the innocent smile on thy face
Whatever thy hand found to do
Was done with affection and grace.



*Sines on the happy death 53
of my esteemed friend John Waters*
*King Death hath gone by with his scythe
Selecting the young and the best,
My well beloved friend he cut down -
And took him away to his rest.*
*Death's summons all men must obey -
When their courage is put to the test,
Yet sorely our patience is tried -
When those are removed we love best.*

Hand-written transcription of an elegiac poem written by an unnamed friend
of John Waters. Found in the Waters Family Scrapbook. P. 53.

“For principle firmly thou stood
 As a rock for the true and the right
 Never counting the cost or the foes
 Ready arm’d for the great moral fight.”⁴¹³

In his last letter to his brother, John’s devotion to God was evident:

How unspeakably joyful must be the contemplation of those who join in with the apostle being able to say I have fought a good fight I have finished my course I have kept the faith [words illegible] there are who at times have not felt a secret influence and power within to turn from darkness to marvellous light very few there are who have not heard in the secret of their hearts a voice crying “*draw near to me and I will draw near to thee*”... great peace and nothing shall offend, they shall rejoice evermore. Truly it is an unspeakable blessing when the hour of trial is at hand to know we have trusted in one who is All Mighty to [illegible], one who never leaves or forsakes, one who [words illegible] closer than a brother. Excuse me, dear brother if an excuse is needful writing so much upon a subject unheeded by and so insipid to many. A right ordering of ourselves is no unprofitable study...I should like a description of some foreign parts you touch at, should it please the Lord to restore me I hope yet to settle in America should I have a prospect there of doing well as a farmer I long to go.”⁴¹⁴

And it appears that John had been close to a woman named Ann Harris, since deceased, for whom he writes an undated elegiac poem. It, too, is lengthy, made up of fourteen four-line stanzas. Ann seems to have been the kind person who tends to the needs of the poor and had been long-suffering herself. She had apparently also helped John with his own suffering:

“And while I sigh for thee
 I might for all thy poor
 For these must ever be,
 Since now thou art no more.

413 *Lines on the happy death of my esteemed friend John Waters*. T.A. Crow. Waters Family Scrapbook. Multiple authors. P.53.

414 Letter. John Waters to Thomas Waters. November 23, 1846.

“I cannot soon forget
They management for these,
So careful was thy lot
To give whateer might please.

“And oh! Thy placid look
And silence when in pain;
Could aught but Christian brook,
Though for eternal gain.

“And now this little deed,
No more in thee I’ll find,
The books thou off did’st read
To feed my sorrowing mind...”⁴¹⁵

John had also written in his last letter some description of what was going on at home, and what was the state of everyone’s health. From it, we get a picture of Thomas Sr. and Elizabeth beginning to slow down, and the general state of affairs in Kingston:

“All things seem to be going on here pretty much as usual, new buildings are rising, business may be a little flourishing, we have such an abundance of vegetables and apples, that we scarcely know how to use them. Papa is in the garden nearly all the day, age seems gradually to wear him down, he sometimes is restless but we find it prudent to make way for him, Mamma still holds up well she gradually gets thinner, all the rest are in tolerable health excepting brother Benjamin and myself. Ben appears to be tolerably now though not strong.”⁴¹⁶

Thomas Jr. returns home again

On April 12, 1847, after a severe winter with “ice full three feet thick around us,” Thomas decides to take a trip to the West Indies for not more than two months. He goes as a mate on the ship *Union*. He will receive better wages, “on account of the sickly season where we are bound.”⁴¹⁷

415 Waters Family Scrapbook. Multiple authors. P. 57.

416 *ibid.*

417 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. April 12, 1847.

With the perilous winter conditions at sea, mail deliveries appear to be slower than normal. While we don't know when exactly Thomas learns of his John's passing, we do know that at least two and a half months after his death, Thomas still is unaware:

“Dear Father and Mother

I thought to have received a letter from home on my arrival here but have not, I hope that John has recovered his health and that you are all quite well...I have not heard from you later than last August...”⁴¹⁸

How heartbreaking it must have been for his parents to read their son's letter and know they could not reach him.

Finally, in the summer of 1847, Thomas is able to return home to visit family again, and they no doubt grieve with him the recent loss of his beloved brother John.

We learn from his brother Ben's journal that Ben is the first to see Thomas:

“This morning about 2.30 we were all agreeably surprised by the unexpected arrival of my Brother Thomas from Antigua, who arrived in L-pool in the evening of the 18th in the ship *James Annand*.”⁴¹⁹

Thomas stays with Benjamin in Birkenhead until July 25 when he leaves for Liverpool. Two months later, on September 19, Benjamin travels from Birkenhead to Liverpool to see Thomas again. They return together to Birkenhead and take “a walk in the Park,”⁴²⁰ returning in the afternoon. On September 23, Thomas leaves Liverpool in the ship *Themis* bound for St. Johns, New Brunswick. Then on December 10, Thomas returns in the ship *Orbit* after a rough twenty-three-day passage across the Atlantic.⁴²¹

418 *ibid.*

419 Journal. Benjamin Waters. July 18, 1847.

420 Journal. Benjamin Waters. September 19, 1847.

421 Journal. Benjamin Waters. December 10, 1847.

Journal.
B. Waters.
1846.
7 Mo/30. This morning Prince
Albert came to open Albert
Dock Liverpool most of the
shops in Birkenhead were clo-
-sed a very fine day.
7 Mo/31. Prince Albert laid
the foundation stone of a
Sailor's Home, Liverpool;
I went this morning with a
friend to Chester and there
took a boat on the river Dee
to Eaton Hall a fine hand-
-some building surrounded by

A portion of Benjamin Waters' handwritten journal containing thirty-two entries spanning the dates July 30, 1846, to January 9, 1848, has been preserved. This page is dated July 30, 1846, and describes Ben's attendance at a major public event, the launching by Prince Albert of the Albert Dock at Liverpool, and the laying of the inaugural stone for the Sailor's Home there.

Chapter 16

The Potato Famine & the Gold Rush

BY CHRISTMAS OF 1847, Thomas describes being “laid up in a sailor’s den in Liverpool,” and describes it as “the most miserable of all.”⁴²² Even more miserable than his Christmas the previous year, where he was “driven by tremendous gale under the lea of Cape Chapeau Rouge, Newfoundland for refuge, any port in a storm, short of provisions, a very mouldy biscuit and spoonful of grease for a day’s allowance.”⁴²³

On January 9, 1848, Thomas leaves Liverpool aboard *Brig Catherine* bound for Yarmouth, Nova Scotia.⁴²⁴ At some point later that year, he begins working for Digby, Nova Scotia shipbuilder John Dakin. He writes from Boston that he is “in the employ of Mr. Dakin & Sons” where he has been:

“...helping to rig a barque and provided I had been a few days sooner I should have been mate of her, but however I am mate in another smart craft, and I think I shall get on pretty well...”⁴²⁵

In September, a humorous shipboard cooking incident occurs at anchor in Digby:

422 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Waters Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. Christmas 1847. No date.

423 *ibid.*

424 Journal. Benjamin Waters. March 9, 1848.

425 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Waters Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. May 6, 1848.

“I must give you a small incident which occurred a short time since, in making or mixing an apple duff, or pudding as you call it. While we were at anchor in Digby the Captain sent me off some early apples, but they were rather sour and so I told the cook to make an apple grunt as the Yankees call it; the directions I gave the cook was—to make it the same as a sea pie, only instead of meat and potatoes to fill it up with apples and sweeten and season it to taste.

“I had seen it made and eaten in an American ship and it was first rate. Accordingly with the expectation of a good mess, I had a good appetite and at the usual dinner time the cook brought the mess in the cabin. I thought it smelled rather curious when it first came down and I assure you the taste did not deceive the smell, for the stupid darcy⁴²⁶ had followed my directions to a T and made it like a sea pie all but meat and potatoes; he had seasoned it well with onions, pepper, salt and sugar; and although not gifted with a very weak stomach, still I did not make a hearty meal of it. I cannot recommend his recipe for apple grunt.

“I forgot to mention, a chew of tobacco and about half a pound of soap had fallen off the galley shelf into the mess and of course rendered an agreeable flavour...”⁴²⁷

By the end of September 1848, Thomas is loading *Brig Pageant* “as fast as possible” with Indian corn for orders to Cork, Ireland, where the Irish Potato Famine is still ravaging that country.

The ship arrives in the Cove of Cork on October 29, after a rough Atlantic passage. The cold and wet voyage, which Thomas describes as “never dry” from New York to Ireland, has caused all kinds of unpleasantness, which he nevertheless manages to describe with humor:

“To help the pleasantness of the passage, our cabin was filled with crawling maggots that had escaped from our cargo of Indian corn and had crawled through the crevices into our abode. The cabin was fairly covered overhead with them. At meal times they would drop by the dozen into our tea, coffee or plates etc.

426 The earliest uses of “darcy” in English were sentimental, probably affectionate in intent, although it is likely that even then those who were addressed or referred to by the term found it patronizing. But by the early part of the 20th century, the term had become increasingly offensive and unacceptable. From Dictionary.com.

427 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Waters Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. September 25, 1848.

“The first time they made their appearance the Captain said by way of a joke they would make a fresh mess instead of salt meat. About two days afterwards we had boiled rice for dinner and I observed while he was taking a nip of grog four or five fine large fellows drop into his plate of rice but of course I held my tongue and they having the appearance of grains of rice were not noticed by him.

“I watched until he had eaten two or three and then, handing him the pepper-box, asked him if he would not take some pepper with his fresh mess. An explanation ensued and we have had no more boiled rice since. I have asked him several times since when he will take another fresh mess, but by the screw of his mouth at such times I guess he don’t much like it...”⁴²⁸

Pageant leaves the same day it arrives for Galway Harbour. On December 1, after a month in Galway Harbour, *Pageant* has completed unloading of all the grain and is fitting up the ship to take Irish passengers back to New York City.

It was common practice for ships to refit from delivering cargo to taking passengers. If there was no return cargo to be purchased, it was the only way to make money on the return passage...but one had to take extra precautions:

“...since our arrival here it has been blowing gales all the time, several vessels have been and are now detained since the time of our arrival and by all appearances it will continue so for some time longer. We have discharged all our grain and the storm which is now raging makes us heel over considerably, we have only a few staves to discharge and tomorrow we will be entirely discharged then we are going to rig up berths for passengers, we are already advertised for the flourishing City of New York, to sail on the 12th Dec. but I don’t think we will sail before the 14th or 15th weather permitting.

“I have made up my mind as soon as we get to sea to lock my clothes up in my chest all but two changes and then take the consequences of a passenger ship, “*scratching times*.” There is a tremendous lot of beggars knocking about here they bother me from morning to night and keep my pockets clear of coppers, they are very plentiful with their blessings and sometimes with their cursings, this morning one of them because I refused her wished me a stormy night and a lee shore with a bl–t you at the end.”⁴²⁹

428 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Waters Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. October 29, 1848.

429 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to his Uncle Joseph and Aunt Mary Ann Butterworth. December 1, 1848.

By mid-December, the ship sails away from Galway and after Christmas, Thomas and the crew are “underweigh”⁴³⁰ for sail to America.

Thomas doesn’t appreciate the different customs of the Irish passengers, as he writes to brother Benjamin:

“Irish passengers are certainly the dirtiest levels under the sun, they will make a mess right in the middle of a quoit of rope and at night it makes the ropes slip very uncomfortably through the fingers. They think nothing of doing a job in their kettles or saucepans and just throw it out and put in potatoes and cook them. I thought sailor cooks were dirty but they are nothing to the Irish.”⁴³¹

He is much more circumspect in a letter to his parents, with only one sentence to describe them: “I can’t say that ever I knew rightly what filth and dirt was until I saw Irish passengers for they beat all that ever I came athwart of...”⁴³² Perhaps such details as he described to his brother were not fit to share with one’s mother in those times.

In his colorful way, Thomas can tell a funny story as well. In a pre-Christmas letter to all family wishing them a happy holiday, he spins another humorous cooking yarn:

“This morning the cook was getting breakfast ready and I poked my head into the galley to see what we were going to have. He had a tremendous fire and was sweating like a bull. In one hand he had a flap-jack (what you call a pancake) with the other hand full of molasses he was smearing it over every now and then licking his hands. “Hulloa, Cook, what do you call them?” “Why,” said he, “them’s what I call nice.” The second mate was looking on the other side and he snatched a half done hot pancake out of the pan and dexterously slipped it down the back of the cook’s neck between his shirt and skin. You may depend he hopp’d about smart, but after all he cooked the same one, and I believe it was the second mate who ate it. The Captain has discharged him as he was too dirty.”⁴³³

430 The archaic spelling for “underway,” which some nautical glossaries describe as “a vessel that is moving under control: that is, neither at anchor, made fast to the shore, aground nor adrift.” The Sailor’s Word Book, however, disagrees, explains that they are two different words, and that “underweigh” actually means having “weighed anchor.” It goes on to say, though, that the difference is a “moot point with old seamen.” From *The Sailor’s Word Book: A Dictionary of Nautical Terms*. Smyth, Admiral W. H. 1867. Conway Classics. P. 706.

431 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to his family. December 29, 1848.

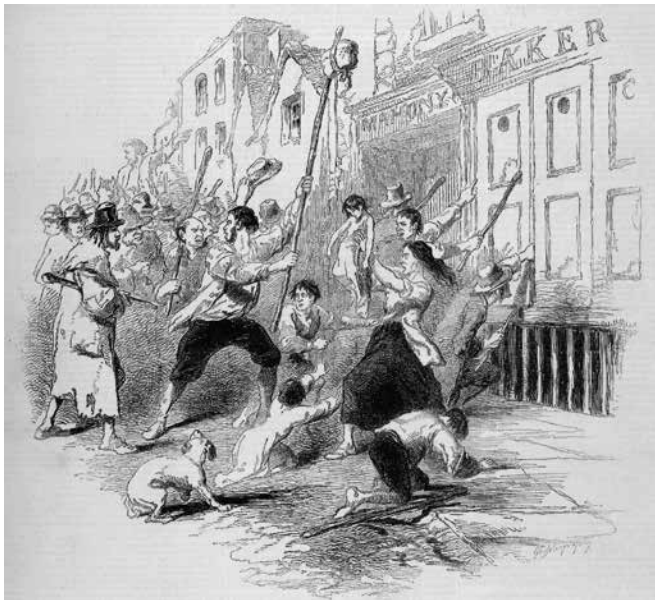
432 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to his family. December 6, 1848.

433 *ibid.*

During his down-time in harbour awaiting the voyage back to North America, Thomas is “filling up an old logbook” with newspapers and scraps of poetry he has received from family.

The Great Potato Famine

The Irish Potato Famine, or the Great Hunger, began in 1845 when a fungus-like organism spread rapidly throughout Ireland. The infestation ruined up to one-half of the potato crop that year, and about three-quarters of the crop over the next seven years. Because the tenant farmers of Ireland—then ruled as a colony of Great Britain—relied heavily on the potato as a source of food, the infestation had a catastrophic impact on Ireland and its population. Before it ended in 1852, the Potato Famine resulted in the death of roughly one million Irish from starvation and related causes, with at least another million forced to leave their homeland as refugees.⁴³⁴



A food riot in Dungarvan, Co. Waterford, Ireland, during the famine. 1846. *The Pictorial Times*. October 10, 1846. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

434 *The Irish Potato Famine*, History.com. Found 2/20/21 at <https://www.history.com/topics/immigration/irish-potato-famine>. For a different perspective based on more recent research, see *The Famine Plot: England's Role in Ireland's Greatest Tragedy* by Pat Coogan. The author gives a fresh and comprehensive account of one of the darkest chapters in world history, arguing that Britain was “in large part responsible for the extent of the national tragedy, and in fact engineered the food shortage in one of the earliest cases of ethnic cleansing.”

Regardless of Thomas' attitude toward the Irish passengers, he is doing a great service to the starving population there by transporting grain (maize or "Indian corn") from North America, even if a percentage of it didn't survive the journey well, suffering as it did from dampness in the hold and maggot infestations.

The California Gold Rush

On his twenty-sixth birthday, he writes to his parents from New York, to describe a new phenomenon that would become another intersection with world history:

"The Californian Gold fever is raging in this city but I don't think I shall be likely to take it, thousands are quitting every day bound to the gold regions, after I get to Digby my voyage is up..."⁴³⁵

The "fever" affected ship captains, too, and made life difficult for the newcomer Thomas, who was trying to convince the Dakins to let him become a ship



A 1849 handbill from the California Gold Rush. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons. Long Island whaling captains had the advantage of experience traveling the 18,000 nautical miles around Cape Hope to get to California. Most whalers could tolerate being at sea for the five to eight months, so thousands of them took advantage of this new opportunity, sailing for gold instead of whales.

435 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Waters Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. March 7, 1849.

master for them: “My being an entire stranger here is a great hindrance to me as several strangers lately have when put in command of vessels ran away with the freight and gone to California.”⁴³⁶

The California Gold Rush had begun on January 24, 1848, when gold was found by James W. Marshall at Sutter’s Mill in Coloma, California. The news of gold brought approximately 300,000 people to California from the rest of the United States and abroad. For nine years, miners extracted more than 750,000 pounds of gold worth about \$2 billion, but after 1852, most of the easily accessible surface gold had been taken. What did happen was that the population of the new state of California, which had been won in the Mexican American War, had ballooned from 1,000 to 380,000.⁴³⁷

But not even the temptation of becoming rich from gold is enough to lure Thomas away from a mariner’s life. Even the constant danger of the worst storms he has ever seen do not detract him. On December 23, 1849, Thomas encounters a terrible hurricane on the way from Digby to Boston:

“...Xmas day and especially the three preceding days I can assure you I suffered. In the first place we were on less than a pint of water a day and that of the consistency of gruel owing to the dirt, in the next place all hands were sick except myself, we had a long passage and lastly on the 23rd Dec. we encountered a hurricane it commenced about 8 in the evening we were very deep laden, but the vessel was well built and well fastened and new that saved us, hundreds of vessels in nearly the same Lat. and Long. foundered on that dreadful night. I have been in Typhoons in the China Sea and storms off Cape Horn and in the Atlantic, but never have I witnessed before anything equal to the 23rd.”⁴³⁸

He spends a miserable and lonely Christmas near Cape Sable Island, 300 kilometers off the Nova Scotia coast near the edge of the Continental Shelf, surviving on a half pint of water per day for three weeks.⁴³⁹

Thomas shares good memories of childhood holidays to counter his current circumstances, in a lovely passage that gives us yet another glimpse into the family’s life:

436 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Waters Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. January 25, 1850.

437 *California Gold Rush*, History.com. Found 3/29/21 at <https://www.history.com/topics/westward-expansion/gold-rush>.

438 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Waters Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. January 25, 1850.

439 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Amy Waters. December 29, 1861.

“Dear Father and Mother

“Hoping a happy Christmas and New Year has passed over your heads as they used to in former days when we used to stone the plums for the big pudding and drop them under the table ‘till we got a chance to get under to eat them (poor Joseph learnt us that trick) and when Pappa used to share out the apples and nuts what a quantity they used to appear in our eyes, 12 apples, 24 chestnuts, 12 hazel nuts and I do not know how many small nuts, toast and butter for breakfast and then after dinner each one their Xmas money.

“I can recollect the first that was given me after the Barham cruise one shilling, it made me feel as rich as Croesus. I did not like dropping it into the round brown crockery money box but I recollect I used to shake the concern about three times a day to make sure it was there after which I got eighteenpence which I invested in a rabbit and hutch that was when we lived in Rectory Place, all hands alive.

“Mary one penny per week, the rest of us halfpenny which generally went for hardbake or that sort of sweetmeat was cheapest and lasted the longest, you see I have filled up one side of this letter about long ago Xmas. I think the happy times of our childhood press on our imagination most in adversity, not that I have the least thing to complain of at present.”⁴⁴⁰

Still grateful

Nonetheless, Thomas is happy working for the Dakins in Digby, and considers himself lucky during a time of massive unemployment of seamen. In November he writes to his parents that the latest vessel has not launched because of “low freights”:

“I am doing well considering the quantity of masters, mates, and seamen at present out of employ. Every thing is very cheap in the victualing department. I have been in steady employment ever since I first went into the Dakins & Son’s employ and they still keep a berth for me although at present they could get many for less wages.

“...I am quite well and comfortable sitting before a warm fire in the cabin by myself, no pipe in my mouth for I have knocked off smoking for

440 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Waters Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. January 25, 1850.

four months back, but fruit of all kinds on the table and plenty of wine or spirits at my call, temperance, not teetotalism is my motto, with plenty of exercise fresh air and salt water..."⁴⁴¹

The Dakins treat him well, and he is looking forward to becoming the master of his own ship: "I am trying to save up enough to get a share in a small vessel which has been promised me by my employers who are very kind to me."⁴⁴²

When there aren't loads to take somewhere along the Atlantic coast, the Dakins have at least some work on land for him:

"I am employed sail making and mending, a trade I picked up at sea and which gains me some pay but not so much as going to sea as of course I am not a proficient, but half a loaf is better than none..."⁴⁴³

Thomas is aware of his good fortune among so much misery, writing: "You think I have no reason to complain and I think so myself for while hundreds are out of employ I am engaged..."⁴⁴⁴

441 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Waters Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. March 7, 1849.

442 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Waters Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. November 22, 1849.

443 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Waters Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. January 25, 1850.

444 *ibid.*

Chapter 17

Thomas Finds Love

*The winters are cold
But we take no harm
For we have plenty of wood
To keep us warm
In pleasant Nova Scotia.*
—THOMAS WATERS JR.⁴⁴⁵

THOMAS IS NOW TWENTY-SEVEN, and reports that he is “quite grey-headed, nearly as much as Mamma.”⁴⁴⁶ He has grown close to the Dakins, and is even living with them:

“I am now living in their house with the family where I am very comfortable. I could tell you some news which would please you but for fear of a future disappointment will keep it till a later period...”⁴⁴⁷

This hints at a momentous event that his parents will only learn about after the fact.

On September 21, 1850, twenty-seven-year-old Thomas marries the not quite eighteen-year-old Amaret Dakin from Marshalltown, a suburb of Digby, Nova Scotia—a land Thomas would love his entire life. “If I ever live ashore, Nova Scotia will be my choice,” he had written prophetically when he was young.⁴⁴⁸

445 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. February 20, 1850.

446 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. January 25, 1850.

447 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. January 25, 1850.

448 *The Waters Family, Volume V*. Turvey, Sheila. P.1.

Obviously, some of this is the result of falling in love with Miss Dakin. He writes to his parents the day after the wedding to inform them of his nuptials:

“This afternoon at 3 O’clock I was married to Miss Amaret Dakin, the eldest daughter of John Dakin Esq. of Marshal Town Digby. I would have informed you as in duty bound but had not made up my mind before and asked your consent although I believe if I have made a bad choice I shall be the chief sufferer but still I think you would have no objection to the person of my choice.

“Her father is the eldest brother of those in whose employ I have been. He is a farmer and occasionally builds ships and is likewise a magistrate much respected, though not rich. I have partly come to agreement for building a share of a vessel to be launched in the Spring. I am now going Master of the Brig in which I came to London and calculate to start off, though much against my wife’s inclination, in a week’s time (make hay while the sun shines). With perseverance and economy I hope to push my way through life.

“We were married by License by the Rev. Thos. Maynard in the church at Marshal town. I have furnished a nice place and commenced housekeeping in Digby. Of course I have still money left to pay my part of the vessel. I would wish to send a large piece of wedding cake but the distance is too far although I shall save some for a month or so and if I have a chance shall send a piece.

Mrs. Waters sends her best respects and love to her new Father and Mother and to Sisters and Brother likewise to Uncle and Aunt etc....”⁴⁴⁹

Amaret Dakin

Amaret (b. October 27, 1832) is the eldest daughter of John Dakin, a ship builder, and Welthea Tucker, and she would become the first known Amaret in the family. Amaret descended from notable Loyalists Brigadier Timothy Ruggles⁴⁵⁰ and John Warwick. Her ancestors can also be traced back to royalty—William the Conqueror, Alfred the Great, King Robert I, and Charlemagne. And perhaps

449 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. September 18, 1850.

450 Timothy is also the father of Bathsheba Spooner, who becomes notorious for having murdered her husband, and in 1778 is the first woman in America to be executed. For more: www.womenhistoryblog.com/2011/06/bathsheba-spooner-murderer.html.



The earliest image we have of Amaret Dakin, and in fact, any relative from the Waters family. It is a daguerreotype, likely from the 1840s.



The “statuesque” Amaret (Dakin) Waters as a young wife and possibly an expectant mother. 1850s.

most intriguing: she is a descendant of the infamous Mayflower passenger, Priscilla Mullens Alden, the subject of Longfellow’s poem of unrequited love, who had to choose between two suitors in the New World.

Following Amaret Dakin’s pedigree down the bottom side, always following the female, you get to Priscilla Mullens Alden. Amaret is very attractive, so Longfellow’s poem about her ancestor could be apt.⁴⁵¹

A mysterious name travels down the family line

The name Amaret has recurred many times in the family since Amaret Dakin Waters. It occurs in multiple branches of the family and has also been used as a middle name. In the family, Amaret is often abbreviated to Amy and most of the Amarets are nicknamed Amy—though not Amaret Smyth, who always went by Amaret. There have been seven Amarets in the family since Amaret (Dakin) Waters— at least one in each generation.

The unusual name is mysterious—there isn’t much information available about its origin or meaning. It’s an exceedingly rare first name, at least in the

⁴⁵¹ It is also the case for many of today’s cousins in the family that if they follow the female line straight down, they get to Priscilla.

US: fewer than one hundred people have been named Amaret in the US since 1880.⁴⁵² Some sources suggest the name is of Indian origin. Still others point to Persian/Iranian origin with the meaning *warrior*; and still others suggest it is of Egyptian origin and means immoral or eternity.⁴⁵³ The etymology of the word suggests that “Ama” is probably from Proto-Indo-European meaning *mother* or *aunt*. It’s also described as a lost nursery-word of the *papa* type.⁴⁵⁴ If we look at the Latin roots, “amo” is the verb for “to love,” and “amare” is the feminine plural—most apt since in the generations of Waters family descendants have many Amarets.⁴⁵⁵

Thomas joins a large family

Thomas describes his new in-laws to his parents in this passage:

“I take plenty of connections out here by my wife. Firstly 4 Brothers, 1 Sister, Uncles 10, Aunts 7, own first Cousins 50 and other cousins too numerous to mention. So you see the family connections are large—some rich, some poor and scattered all over America.

“All the Dakins are ship builders and farmers. My Father in law farms in Summer and in Winter cuts timber off his woodlands and is a master shipbuilder. He is reckoned one of the best in the province, is very hard-working, never idle and a magistrate, still he is not rich—there is some screw loose in the housekeeping department. He is very much respected and liked by all who know him, he is a teetotaller and owns about 250 acres of land part cleared, part wild, with house, barns etc. cows, oxen, sheep, horses, poultry, pigs, part of a small vessel, all clear of debt or mortgage, worth considerable to himself, but if they were brought to the hammer would not amount to much as money is very scarce out here at present.

“Farms are exceedingly cheap out here now as a great many farmers have taken the Canada mania,⁴⁵⁶ sold off and removed thence. By all accounts it

452 *Amaret*. Names.org. Found July 17, 2021, at <https://www.names.org/n/amaret/about>.

453 *ibid*.

454 “*amare*.” WordSense Online Dictionary. Found July 17, 2021, at <https://www.wordsense.eu/amare/>.

455 A collection of information about each of the Amarets are in the family archive at Mywatersfamily.com.

456 In 1851 “Canada” consisted of the Province of Canada (Québec and Ontario) and the independent provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Here Tom is referring to people moving to Québec and Ontario from the Maritimes. This was the beginning of a huge out-migration which would occur between the 1860s-1900. For more see: *Out-Migration from the Maritime Provinces, 1860-1900: Some Preliminary Considerations*, Alan A. Brookes. Published in *Acadiensis*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Spring 1976), pp. 28-29. (Available at JSTOR at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30302523>.)

is a better farming country, that is the land is better than in Nova Scotia, but not near so healthy, Summer very hot, Winter very cold, agues plentiful. I think I have spoken enough of relations and Nova Scotia. The snow is just up to the third pane of our first-floor windows..."⁴⁵⁷

Five days after his wedding (against the desires of his new bride), Thomas leaves in the ship *Bell* loaded with coal for Sydney, Nova Scotia. He arrives safely but writes "on our homeward passage we had a very thick weather and the tide swept us out of our reckoning."⁴⁵⁸ Here is his full description of what might have made Mrs. Waters a widow before she had become used to being a wife:

"...on Saturday night, Oct 25th, we perceived a false light on the Tusket Islands which we supposed was Cape Fourchu light, but soon found our mistake when it was too late for we struck on a sunken ledge, but in a short time passed over it but not until we had beat a large hole through the ship's bottom. We kept the pumps agoing and unlashd our long boat, but the sea was running so high it would have been a poor chance. The vessel and cargo were not insured.

"The leak gained fast upon us, and so did the gale which was very heavy. At midnight the water had risen over the forecandle floor and the men began to despair of their lives which I could have saved but by sacrificing the vessel and cargo which I was in hopes if we could keep her afloat till daylight of saving.

"At daylight came a thick fog, but I found the vessel could not float much longer so I crowded sail and steered dead in for the land in hopes of finding some spot to save our lives upon. We were now almost even with the water's edge, and several times when the sea broke over her fore and aft I thought it was her last plunge. The men now wanted the boat to be got over the side but I refused and showed them the folly of such an undertaking as in such a sea she could not have lived a minute, but I crowded more canvas until the vessel fairly trembled with the pressure.

"She now became logg'd and answered her helm slowly and badly. At 9 A.M. Sunday through the thick fog we made breakers ahead and shortly after the rocky coast not an eighth of a mile distant, but the breakers were so heavy it was useless to think of life if we ran upon them, therefore I

457 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. March 3, 1851.

458 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. November 26, 1850.

hauled my wind and ran along the edge of the breakers in hopes of finding some more auspicious which in a few minutes we descried.

“We ran into a small cove until we struck the bottom, protected from both wind and sea. We could not have floated many minutes more. Upon viewing our bottom when the tide left us dry it appeared incredible that we had kept her afloat so long. After the accident a piece of rock must have stuck in the hole and worked out after we grounded in the cove. We were not expensively damaged, not over £50 and after all it turned out fortunate for we got an extra price for our coal as it was much needed and the owners found a sale for their vessel at a remunerative price.”⁴⁵⁹

By the time he writes this letter, Thomas is back at home, “living ashore at home and am very comfortable...” in the Nova Scotia climate, which is “considered the most healthy in N. America...we have no agues here.”⁴⁶⁰

He is back at sea around holiday-time but arrives home the day after Christmas, where he enjoys a meal a bit different to what he was used to in England. He did, however, pine for his fondly recalled childhood Christmas dessert, his mother’s plum pudding. As Daisy Morant wrote in *Century Home* magazine in 1987, “the statuesque and beautiful Amaret had never prepared one of these, but there is a first time for everything.”⁴⁶¹

“I...enjoyed the American roast beef and plum pudding substitutes consisting of doughnuts, jo floggers, flapjacks, crullers, pies etc. and many other curious named but nice eating articles. Amaret tried her hand at my request at a plum pudding and considering that she only had a faint recollection of seeing and tasting one in her life and that was in St John’s New Brunswick you will not wonder at its being a partial failure. I say partial because when boiled and put on the table it was half a plum pudding and half a plain pudding the plums mysteriously being all at the bottom, or at one end. However if you will send me a recipe I know I will have a whole plum pudding.”⁴⁶²

459 *ibid.*

460 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. November 26, 1850. “Ague” is a term describing the condition of fever and chills, especially when caused by malaria, but can also refer to what we would call a flu, or influenza virus. Thomas likely saw a lot of these kinds of illnesses on his sea journeys.

461 *The Captain’s Plum Pudding*, D. Morant. *Canada Century Home*. December-January 1987 issue. P. 10-13.

462 Letter. Thomas Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. March 3, 1851. A note at its ends explains that “Jumbles are a kind of shortbread, crullers twisted doughnuts.”

His mother Elizabeth obliges and sends her recipe by the end of the following year, when Amaret is successful in reproducing it for her husband. Apparently, there was also a less precise but more entertaining version of this recipe in verse form which has been handed down for centuries. It goes like this:

If you wish to make the pudding in which everyone delights,
Of six pretty new laid eggs, you take the yolks and whites,
Beat them all up well together till they thoroughly combine,
And be sure you chop the suet up particularly fine,
Take a pound of well stored raisins, and a pound of currants dried.
A pound of pounded sugar, and some candied peel beside,
Beat it all up well together with a pound of wheaten flour.
And let it stand and settle for a quarter of an hour,
Then tie the mixture in a cloth and put it in a pot.
Some people like the water cold, and some prefer it hot,
Although I do not know which of these two plans I ought to praise,
I know it ought to boil an hour for every pound it weighs,
If I were Queen of France or still better Pope of Rome,
I would have a Christmas pudding every day I dined at home.
All the world should have a piece and if any did remain.
Next morning for my breakfast I would have it fried again.⁴⁶³

Amy, as Thomas calls Amaret, becomes pregnant early in 1851; Thomas describes the birth of their first child on October 7 to his parents in a letter that is full of intriguing insights:

“I am writing this letter alongside of your grandchild and the mother is doing well. Amy was safely delivered on the 7th of this month at 7 in the morning of a daughter. I am going to call her Elizabeth after its Grandmother and Aunt. The old women say it looks like me but I can't see much resemblance excepting the same colored eyes, a dimple in the chin and our family mark, I believe a mark in the underlip.⁴⁶⁴ I was at sea but arrived two days after the occurrence and am stopping one day home as my vessel is loading in St Mary's Bay some distance from here. I start off tomorrow morning.”⁴⁶⁵

463 Elsie, Thomas & Amy's granddaughter, said, “My father used to walk around singing the poem while we mixed it.” Quote from *The Captain's Plum Pudding*, D. Morant. *Canada Century Home*. December-January 1987 issue, P. 10.

464 It's unclear what “mark” Tom is referring to here.

465 Letter. Thomas Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. October 1851. No date.

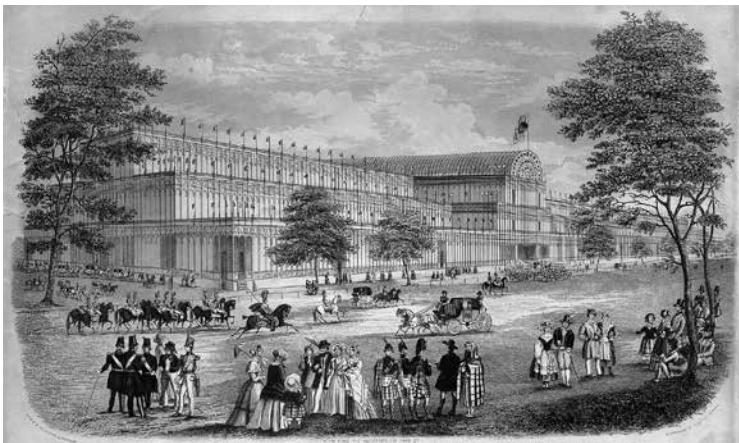
There's no rest for Thomas as he is employed in the coastal trade between the United States and what he calls "our Province." He is heading soon to the West Indies.

The Great Exhibition

At this time the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations has opened in England, sponsored by the industrious Prince Albert, husband of Queen Victoria. It is considered the prince's crowning achievement and is an event of global interest. Thomas mentions his regret at not being able to visit England to see it: "I should like to have seen the Exhibition but business before pleasure."⁴⁶⁶

The Exhibition had opened on May 1, 1851 and would close at the end of October. It featured the magnificent Crystal Palace, a feat of architectural engineering. The six-month event hosted six million people, including the most famous celebrities of the time—Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, Michael Faraday, Charlotte Brontë, Charles Dickens, Lewis Carroll and many others.

Excitement about the exhibition reaches even to Digby, where Thomas reports that "...even in our quiet small town we have Exhibition bonnets, brooches, handkerchiefs, etc."⁴⁶⁷



The Crystal Palace at the Great Exhibition, London, England, 1851. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

⁴⁶⁶ *ibid.*

⁴⁶⁷ Letter. Thomas Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. July 15, 1851.

On New Year's Eve, 1851, Thomas writes of his happy life as a new husband, father and homeowner:

"Amy and I mostly every week take a sleigh ride out to my Father in Law's a few miles back in the country. It is the most pleasant mode of riding that I know of. We intend spending New Year's day there. Xmas we made a plum pudding English fashion we had the company of an Uncle and Aunt of my wife they have a large farm of several hundred acres. We spent a day and night with them a few days previous on their farm.

"People live very different here to what they do in the old country. The cold is very intense here, our breath freezes on the bed clothes, and our bread, meat etc. have to be thawed before we can eat. I employ myself carpentering I have made a kitchen table, plate rack, stools, knife box, cupboard, wooden ladle and a shoe horn with several other things and I find plenty of amusement with my tools. I wish I had a complete set, they are very expensive here.

"Nova Scotia is a poor country for a lazy and shiftless person. Work is the watchword to be independent [sic]. Little Lizzie is doing very well and so is her mother. She has just taken off caps from the baby she wished me to inform you. I am very fond of my baby; it is a new incentive to toil. I sometimes wish you were all out here. Living is so cheap and the country to my eyes so beautiful."⁴⁶⁸

The new Mrs. Waters must quickly become accustomed to managing domestic life and raising children without her husband at her side, though, like his father, Thomas maintains continuous communication with his wife through letters, and is clearly engaged from a distance in his family's activities.

Letter-writing is changing, or at least the paper is. Thomas writes to his parents in October 1851 on lined paper, which is the only kind he can get there. "You see by my using ruled paper that with my American wife I have taken up American letter writing, or rather paper. There is no other sort of writing paper to be got here."⁴⁶⁹

468 Letter. Thomas Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. December 31, 1851.

469 Letter. Thomas Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. October 1851. Undated. In fact, an Englishman, John Tetlow, was given the first patent for a lined paper ruling machine in 1770. By the early 1800s, people started using the blue-lined paper we see today. From *A brief history of lined paper*, Garden Path Language website, found 12/2/21 at <http://gardenpathlanguage.blogspot.com/2013/06/a-brief-history-of-lined-paper>.

Tom is away cruising through the summer, fall and winter of 1851-52, and it's not an easy season:

“After a middling successful Summer’s cruising I have come to an anchor for a few stormy months as I cannot get a freight that will pay the extra risk of a winter voyage...The winter has been very ccommodat [sic] so far and very disastrous to some of our vessels, more have been lost this year than for a many year previous...”⁴⁷⁰

A growing family

After returning from the first trip of the season in the spring of 1852, Thomas describes seeing his eldest daughter Elizabeth: “I find Mrs. Waters and child quite well. Lizzy was baptized in the church we were married in. She has not cut any teeth yet and I think is rather backward...”⁴⁷¹

Throughout this decade, Amy and Thomas’ family is growing—they will have four daughters by 1856.

During this time the inventions of the first Industrial Revolution⁴⁷² are making their way to Nova Scotia and modernizing travel and communication for Thomas and Amy: “We are going to have a railroad here soon, the telegraph is already from Digby to Halifax and on to the States through the Provinces.”⁴⁷³

Thomas seems happy and busy at home. He describes his bucolic life in several letters, where in fall the apples are abundant:

“Nova Scotia is very pleasant. Round our house the squirrels and birds are very plentiful especially hummingbirds, I live in the middle of an orchard, I am as comfortable as I well can be, keep very healthy and I hope you are the same...I am much obliged to you for your recipes. I suppose you have heard of the new style of dress the women here have adopted called the Bloomer costume, it consists of hat, short frock and Turkish trousers; it is not in fashion with us, only with the Yankees.”⁴⁷⁴

470 Letter. Thomas Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. December 31, 1851.

471 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to brother Benjamin Waters. April 25, 1852.

472 *Second Industrial Revolution*. Wikipedia. Found 4/5/21 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Industrial_Revolution.

473 Letter. Thomas Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. November 15, 1852.

474 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Benjamin Waters.

“I live surrounded by orchards. I can or could pick apples out of my window and they are laying all around the house but they are not so good as the ones we have at home and very few of them will keep any time, it is amusing to see the squirrels pick the sweet apples throwing the sour ones away, we have a great variety of birds in summer but nearly all leave us in winter.”⁴⁷⁵

“...Apples are very plentiful here, a large crop this year and cider mill next door; apples and other fruit trees all round; ducks geese and cows with a sprinkling of hens before the door. I can reach apples off the trees from the window...

“I am busy making a wheelbarrow and have nearly got it done. I am now sitting by my own fireside with a blazing wood fire, my wife getting the baby to sleep and a pitcher of cider (which I got for nothing as they are busy grinding apples and making cider next door—when I say next door you must not imagine an adjoining building but one on the next lot of land) on the table, with writing materials etc.

“Out of doors the wind whistling and the hail pattering against the house making the already cheerful fireside more comfortable by comparison. We will soon have sleighing again the most pleasant mode of travelling that I know of. The winters here are very cold and severe but still they are pleasant. Living is very cheap, good flour 20 shillings per barrel of 196 lbs, beef 2 pence per lb, butter (on account of the dry season dear) 10 pence a lb.

“I have got a nice fat pig of my own. My Father in Law keeps it with his and is now fattening it for Xmas. I can go about a stone’s throw from my house and gather first rate shell fish called clams which are capital eating. In summer time I can catch as much cod fish and haddock in one day as would last me a year. In winter I can snare as many hares (they call them rabbits here) in one night as you could eat in a week, no game laws here, food is plentiful but money scarce...”⁴⁷⁶

When there are no goods to ferry along the coast, Thomas works on clearing land and “saving hard” for their new home.

475 Letter. Thomas Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. October 1851. Undated.

476 Letter. Thomas Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. November 15, 1852.

“At present I am doing nothing particularly, carpentering a little, and sometimes with axe on shoulder walk into the woods and help to clear some land for my future house. The place where I purpose to build is on my Father in Law’s farm which a new road has lately divided. The place is as yet a wilderness, not a house on or by the road, nothing but immense trees. A nice little brook meanders close to the spot and birch and sugar maple trees surround. It is hard work cutting down trees, pulling out roots and burning off.”⁴⁷⁷

In addition, Thomas is helping the Dakins build ships that he then takes shares in, though one (*Scotia*), mastered by Captain Dakin (Amy’s uncle) is wrecked on a trip to England and the captain and crew barely escape with their lives. Another ship fares a bit better for Thomas, as he tells his parents in November 1852:

“We sold the *Antelope* and I am about commencing to build another. We did pretty well with her but she was not suited to the trade. We got a fair price but half the amount is a note on one and a half months.”⁴⁷⁸

But he still is not having the kind of luck he had hoped to. He says to Ben in June, “The sea seems to have a grudge against me but patience and perseverance may overcome it.”⁴⁷⁹

In the same letter, written from an unnamed place at sea, he tells Benjamin of a plan he is considering:

“Perhaps I may go in the vessel to Australia if we can sell the vessel in shares to each passenger, and then sell the vessel out there and go to the diggings,⁴⁸⁰ stop there a few years and return to healthy Nova Scotia.”⁴⁸¹

But the winter of 1852 will cause Thomas to lose all the merchandise on a ship in a “dreadful gale” on the American coast in which “several hundred vessels and men were lost.” He doesn’t tell his family until the springtime, when he writes brother Ben, detailing the loss of the ship, and its impact on his income. “I should have written before but did not like to write bad news...I never told

477 *ibid.*

478 *ibid.*

479 Letter. Thomas Jr. to Benjamin Waters. June 15, 1852.

480 Thomas is referring to the gold rush in Australia, then a young colony of the British Empire.

481 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Benjamin Waters. June 15, 1852.

you or any one home that I suffered considerable loss by it though nothing in comparison with others.”⁴⁸²

He concludes by, reluctantly, asking his brother for financial help:

“When the gale commenced I was on my road to Boston deep laden and a heavy deckload of wood (which I had purchased to sell again in Boston). With the gale came a thick fog such as I daresay is only seen on this coast. Knowing my near proximity to a lee shore, I hove to, hoping the gale would either subside or the fog clear up, but the gale increased and the fog continued and I found by an increasing sea and a cast of the lead that I could not be far from land.

“My deckload soon began to wash overboard but I heeded it little as I expected to lose all for there was little chance for life with such a gale on a lee shore. My only hope, and it was only like a straw to a drowning man, was my good anchors and cables which I cleared away and when the roar of the breakers (plainly heard above the tempest though still unseen), I found my last chance must be tried.

“I drop’d my anchors and paid out the cables to the bitter end and stopped them to the mast. They held for a short time and but for a short time, the sea in the meantime making a clear breach over us and endangering us foundering. The anchors now came home and I was preparing to cut away the masts when the fog as we call it glinned, that is partially cleared up, and shew’d us within three ship lengths the mast heads of a sunken ccomm which had like us tried her last but to her unavailing chance and all with her had perished. It likewise shewed us that by quick action we might yet be saved. I slipped my chains hoisted the head of my jib and in ten minutes vessel and all hands were safe.

“After the gale was over, the coast was found strew’d with wrecks and dead bodies. Had the fog continued I should never have had to trouble you with these lines. By the loss of a deckload and chains and anchors I was obliged to run in debt or sacrifice what I had. Had I not been froze in this Winter I might have paid up but as it was I cannot.

“It comes against my grain to borrow but necessity ccommo [sic] me to try. I was doing well and still am if I could get time to pay but unfortunately the person with whom the debt was contracted has since been drowned

482 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Benjamin Waters. April 26, 1852.

and his affairs are settled by a lawyer from whom I expect but little favour. If you without any detriment to yourself (for I would sooner lose all than be a drawback to my youngest and only brother) can let me have thirty pounds and if my father could let me have twenty pounds more for a short time I would gladly pay the lawfull [sic] interest here which is six per cent. I know you will if you can therefore if you do not I shall put it down not that you are unwilling but that you are unable.

“It comes hard for me after all my industry and perseverance to be again a poor man for the want of a little time and money. The vessel was and is partly insured but they pay nothing without; it is a total loss. Money here is very scarce...”⁴⁸³

Benjamin, who is still only an apprentice for Benjamin Bake, answers his brother’s call and finds the entire fifty pounds requested.

In his thank-you letter to his brother, Thomas also offers his thoughts on Ben’s future as a grocer:

“I received your letter with the fifty pound note enclosed and now I know I have a Brother. I hope it may be in my power to help you some time but I hope against hope for I hope you may never be in need. I can truly say I am much obliged to you and will return it as soon as possible. I think you would do well to set up for yourself for you must know the business well by this time.”⁴⁸⁴

483 *ibid.*

484 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Benjamin Waters. June 15, 1852.

Chapter 18

Brothers Support Each Other

IT IS PERHAPS AT THIS MOMENT that a fundamental shift occurs in the relationship between Thomas and his brother Ben. They are now not so much older and younger brother as they are simply brothers. They are both taking on the full mantle of adulthood and business and helping each other when and however they can.

This is illustrated in their correspondence throughout the 1850s, where they discuss money and their respective futures. Thomas shows a great deal of interest in his brother's business endeavours, offering supportive suggestions and business advice:

“I received your letter today and was very glad to hear of your commencing to make money for yourself for I think you are well competent to carry on Business on your own hook. I see that you use Quakers to protect your interests as well as we at sea, though in a different shape and on the attractive principle while we use them as repellers. I mean the bags of sawdust that you mentioned you have to ornament and fill your otherwise empty shelves, now we use or formerly it was the custom to use quakers in the shape of wooden guns painted like real ones which on the approach of a suspicious customer we run out of the ports so that the sight of such dangerous looking innocents might frighten the customer away. Go on



Earliest images of brothers Benjamin (left) and Thomas Waters (right), who would be close throughout their lives. 1860s.

and prosper is my earnest wish for you I need not tell you that honesty is the best policy for we were brought up so, though I think in my youthful days I did not follow it strictly. I am glad to hear Mary is with you and no doubt you will both be comfortable.

“...Tell me if you can what profits you make or average and then I can form some idea of your doings, what stock you have and what it cost, whether credit or for cash, that is if it is not too much bother.”⁴⁸⁵

In 1851, Thomas asks Ben to introduce the Dakins to his boss Mr. Bake when they are in Liverpool:

“Captain Dakin’s vessel which is called the Scotia and is now on her passage to Liverpool and you will see Captain Dakin and W. Dakin, two of my wife’s uncles, they are fine industrious enterprising men, real Americans, their education has all been in practice. I hope if you should see them you will give them all the information you can. Americans like they are rather fond of showy dress. I think they would like to be introduced to Mr. Bake.”⁴⁸⁶

485 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Benjamin Waters. Undated.

486 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Benjamin Waters. July 15, 1851.

Captain Dakin is Amy's uncle, though he is about the same age as Thomas. He is mentioned many times in letters, and we might assume from the way Thomas speaks of him that the two of them were friends.⁴⁸⁷ In December 1851, Thomas is away and unable to attend an important event for the Dakins:

“Capt. Dakin was married a few days after arriving here to Miss Jane Bent a daughter of Dr Bent of this place and left with his bride two days after for sea. I was away at the time and have not seen him.”⁴⁸⁸

Thomas' hopes to return to England for a family visit at the end of the year are ruined when the ship he is to become captain of is in a catastrophic wreck, with his uncle-in-law at the helm. The surviving crew are finally saved, but it is a harrowing experience for all and the consequence is that Thomas' dream of becoming a captain, like his dream of visiting England, will have to wait a little longer:

“I promised to write to you so soon as I should find out to what port the Scotia was bound. I now have to inform you that in a heavy gale on the 24th November while on her passage to the port at which I was to take charge she was cast away and totally wrecked the Captain and crew were saved with much difficulty after having clung to the wreck all night and next day when they were saved by a gallant boat's crew, they suffered a good deal having been exposed without shelter to the whole of a heavy snow storm. Captain Dakin is now here and I am happy to say does not look much the worse for the rub. I am now out of a berth but expect to take charge of some vessel soon as I could have got a berth before had I not waited for the Scotia. Clearing a piece of land for a house now occupies my time, it is very hard work and hot into the bargain as we have to burn the brush and underwood to get it out of our way, the logs we pile up to burn next spring, it seems a pity to burn good timber but it costs as much to get it to market as it is worth. I cannot say now when it is likely I shall see home again but hope soon.”⁴⁸⁹

487 One of Captain Dakin's children was Archibald Dakin, from whom Tom's son Ben will eventually buy a pharmacy in Wareham, Massachusetts. From the Waters Family Scrapbook, we learn that Captain Dakin will die of Yellow Fever in Africa more than a decade later in 1864.

488 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. December 31, 1852.

489 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. December 1852. Undated.

Pining for home

Though Thomas will soon reach the pinnacle of his career and become a ship's captain, he misses his family on both continents, and this struggle will be evident in his letters for the remainder of his life.

Late in 1852 Thomas Jr. expresses his hopes to visit England, and promises to bring a treat:

“I mean to bring some real Bluenose potatoes grown by Mr. Dakin. They are of a kind that has almost entirely escaped the rot and are counted this side of the world the best that can be raised. They command the highest price in the markets and we export them largely to the United States, in fact so largely that the Yankees call the Scotian by the nickname of Bluenoses, they are an early kind...”⁴⁹⁰

He also talks of his new home, and his old one, commiserating with his father about loneliness and separation from family:

“I intend to live soon on my own land and in my own house if possible and I like flowers round me, it puts me in mind of home in Old England which I often think of though I hardly expect to enjoy that home much more, my home must now be Nova Scotia, but still for memory's sake I would like to draw as much of Old English scenery round me as I could. I do not have that indescribably lonely feeling now which I used to have before I was married, in fact I feel I have a home. I daresay my Father has felt the loneliness before he was married...”⁴⁹¹

Thomas Jr. becomes a captain

On March 10, 1853, Thomas writes to his parents that he has now become employed by the E.D. Jewett Co. He has accepted their offer over a competitor's after consultation with the Dakins. He is taking a calculated risk, which he lessens further by insuring the freight, but still has had to “lay out a large sum of money” for the shares:

490 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. November 15, 1852.

491 *ibid.*

MASTER'S CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE.
(Issued pursuant to the Act 13th and 14th Vict., cap. 93.)

N^o. 54.354

Fifty-Four Thousand Three Hundred and *Fifty-four*

Thomas Waters

Born at *Glasgow* County of *Hants* in the year *1823*

Has been employed in the Capacities of *App. Mate & Master* *12* years in the
British Merchant Service in the *Foreign* Trades.

Bearer's Signature *Thomas Waters*

Granted by the REGISTRAR GENERAL OF SEAMEN, LONDON. By order of the BOARD OF TRADE.

M. W. Jones Registrar.

Issued at *Glasgow*
this *17* day of *February* 1854

N^o. OF REGISTER TICKET. *400790*

OFFICE
4
COUNTERPART

* * * Any Person Forging, Altering, or Fraudulently using this Certificate, will be subject to a penalty of FIFTY POUNDS, or THREE MONTHS' Imprisonment with or without HARD LABOUR; and any other than the Person it belongs to becoming possessed of this Certificate, is required to transmit it forthwith to the REGISTRAR GENERAL OF SEAMEN, LONDON.

Thomas Waters Jr.'s Master's Certificate, dated February 17, 1854.

"...Messrs Jewett & Co offered me either a part of their vessel to buy or ten pounds a month wages, or to sail the vessel on shares, the last of which offers I took; consequently I run the risk of not making anything and again of making extra good wages. Of course I made as good calculations as I could as to the chances both ways. Messrs Dakin think with ordinary luck I may make double wages and that I have a very good offer..."⁴⁹²

The ship is *Brig Huron*, and not only is Thomas a shareholder in the ship, but he is also Master, his first captaincy—though he won't actually receive his master's certificate until nearly a year later.

They sail for Glasgow on March 12, 1853; Thomas expects to reach his destination in a month's time. The ship is big and slow: "She is a dull sailor so I don't expect to make a quick trip. She is larger than Dakin's Brig Scotia..."⁴⁹³

In summer of 1853, Thomas reports that another baby is on the way to join daughter Lizzie, and we hear more of Amy's discontent. As Thomas implores his parents to write to her in her loneliness, we are reminded that his parents have not yet even met their daughter-in-law face to face, let alone their granddaughter:

492 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. March 10, 1853.

493 *ibid.*

“I wish very much to have your daguerotypes⁴⁹⁴ [sic] if you will send them to me (I mean my Father and Mother) I will send you Amy and Lizzie’s as I have them with me...”⁴⁹⁵

Back home, Amy is nearing her “confinement.” Their second daughter, Mary, will be born August 15, 1853.

Thomas also seems unhappy at leaving his family again:

“I feel leaving home more than I used [to] before I had a daughter, though it is only for a short time. Amy is all I could wish for in a wife and endeavours to help me to save. I think Lizzie looks like her Grandfather Waters. She is growing tall.”

He urges his parents to write to Amy “as often as possible,” as she is “very downhearted” about his trip.⁴⁹⁶

Thomas misses his family in England as well. He expects his two youngest sisters, Jane and Nancy, are “big girls now,” saying, “...Sometimes when I think of them and those that are gone it makes the water start from my upper daylights.”⁴⁹⁷



Thomas Waters’ younger sisters Jane and Nancy. 1863.

494 A daguerreotype was the first publicly available photographic process invented in 1839 by Louis Daguerre. For more: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daguerreotype>.

495 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. June 24, 1854.

496 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. March 10, 1853.

497 *ibid.*

It seems Thomas' growing depression through this decade encompasses a greater loneliness for family than just his wife or his parents. He is literally "at sea" on the ocean that separates his family of origin in England and his own growing family in Nova Scotia. He writes, "Amy knows though my body is in Nova Scotia my heart is in Old England and I feel though I have a kind wife that I am still only a stranger."⁴⁹⁸

He spends Christmas that year off the coast of Newfoundland, close to his family, but not close enough. In the summer of 1854, he is again languishing in the Glasgow port, now on a ship called *Louise Jewett*, also built by E.D. Jewett. This ship is faster than *Brig Huron*, as he writes to his brother Ben from Greenock, Scotland:

"The *Louise Jewett* has beaten every vessel that left St. John within a fortnight of her and I expect my own has won a wager as I have beaten the ship *Montrose* which vessel trip't her anchor at the same moment that I did but did not arrive here till yesterday."⁴⁹⁹

Thomas has reason to be proud of this ship as he isn't only the ship's captain, but also a part-owner. Naval Marine Archive records show that Thomas was a managing owner of eight of the total sixty-four shares in the ship. The other two managing owners were Edward Darret (E.D.) Jewett with forty shares, and Willington Ring with sixteen shares.⁵⁰⁰

Regarding matters in England, Thomas is sending money through his sister Elizabeth to his parents, and saving some for Uncle Joseph's son Edmund Lord Butterworth,⁵⁰¹ who is mentioned several times in Thomas' letters:

"I am Hoping you and Papa are in good health as I am at present. I have sent to Eliz. A P.O. order for 15£ but she is to give you only 13£ I would have sent the whole 23£ but Uncle wants me to keep some for Edmond and he will credit you with it for repairing your house so I have kept the balance and if I do not give it to Ed will send it to you or indeed will send it to you and let Uncle send what money he intends for Ed. However you can mention when you feel able to write what I had better do.

498 *ibid.*

499 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Benjamin Waters. August 3, 1854.

500 *Naval Marine Archive—The Canadian Collection*. Found 5/1/21 at <https://ships.navalmarinearchive.com/ships/2732/related>.

501 This is the same "E.L. Butterworth" whose school notebook was found with the quote that began Section 1.

“Now Mother I want to tell you something else, if you will keep a girl to help you I will most gladly pay her and feel grateful to you for allowing me to do so. You and Papa are our centre point of unity and we must take care of you for the sake of ourselves. I hope as you have lived to see most of us above our difficulties that you will live to see us all enjoying ourselves and independent, it will be I know a Father & Mother’s greatest pleasure to see their children comfortable and I think you will live to see it.”⁵⁰²

We hear more about Amy’s sadness at being away so long from her husband, and more clearly of Thomas’ dissatisfaction. He even considers going into business on shore and leaving his life at sea:

“Amy in her last letter to me was discontented about me going away so long and says her Mother is very anxious about me but I think it is better for me to go one long voyage than two or three short ones and I am strongly thinking of giving up the sea after this voyage and trying business ashore. I think I ought to see and comfort my wife & children if I can do so and gain a living too. The sea is meant for unmarried men for I don’t think it was intended that a Husband should leave wife & children to gain bread...”⁵⁰³

As there is not one letter in the collection we have from Thomas for the entire year of 1855, we assume that either some letters were lost, or that he spent this year at home. If the latter is the case, he may have begun the year at home for the birth of his third child, a daughter named Alice,⁵⁰⁴ on January 6. We know he ended it with Christmas at home.⁵⁰⁵ Their family would grow by a fourth daughter, Amaret, on October 9, 1856.⁵⁰⁶

Ben sets up shop

A few years earlier, in 1853, Ben had started a grocery in Rawtenstall, very near his mother’s family roots. His older sister Mary, who had been living with

502 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Elizabeth Waters. June 24, 1854.

503 *ibid.*

504 Alice will become a major character in the family story as the matriarch of the Cairns family in Saskatchewan. See end of Section 1, and Section 2.

505 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Amy Waters. December 29, 1861. In this letter, Thomas looks back at where he spent Christmas each year for the past two decades and he indicated he was “home in Digby” for Christmas 1855.

506 She is the second Amaret born in the family.

her uncle Joseph Butterworth in Rochdale since at least 1851,⁵⁰⁷ had moved to Rawtenstall in 1853 to help Ben set up shop and presumably live with him. Thomas again offers advice to them:

“I received your kind letter, and tho’ much hurried wish to drop you a few quick lines to help cheer you up as I know the beginning of any business be full of cares. I certainly think you are doing well for a beginning and I think small profits and quicker returns are better than large profits and slow returns. I should say it is better to have the price a little low especially at the first, tho’ no doubt you know better about that than I. If you can only hold your own the first year, you may be almost certain to gain something the next and increase the following years. Beginning business is like planting a young fruit tree; the planter is well satisfied if it will only live the first year, being certain that if it does it is sure to increase and bring forth fruit afterwards...”⁵⁰⁸

Even with Thomas’ advice, Ben and Mary struggle with this little business, not even meeting expenses, losing “£1 a month.”⁵⁰⁹ Ben claims he has “no care or anxiety,”⁵¹⁰ but his brother Thomas considers Ben to be “breaking down through hopelessness.”⁵¹¹

In the spring of 1856, Thomas assesses Ben’s business prospects in a detailed analysis that sounds as much like a father coaching a son as a brother advising a brother:

“...Received your letter of the 2nd Ult. And am glad to hear that you are well and am much obliged to you for your statistical acct. of takings. I do not think you can rightly tell what your prospect is until you have been settled at least one year, as it takes some time for the customers to gather, but you have already a great improvement upon Chichester trade tho’ perhaps you have more capital employed. The chief thing I look at is what income can you reasonably expect to realize at the most for the next five years average. You know if you only cover expenses now say 25/ per week are you likely to extend your business to double so as to lay by

507 1851 Census. From *Butterworth-Waters Report*. Family History Diggers. Hallam, Nicola. P. 6. April 6, 2021.

508 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to siblings Mary & Ben Waters. July 28, 1854.

509 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Elizabeth Waters. December 7, 1856.

510 *ibid*.

511 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. July 1856. Undated.

£60 or £70 per yr, or increase stock to that amount. Now I know that you and Mary live as economically as they do at home and I think that you ought not to be satisfied until at least that sum is realized yearly over your expenses, tho' I would like to know clear of shop dues etc. what your actual living expenses are—house, food and raiment required for other than shop purposes. Again to find your real earnings you must subtract 6 per cent (besides insurance) for your capital from the gross profits. Could you increase your business much if you had more capital, as that prospect would be a great consideration to saving persons like yourself.”⁵¹²

Thomas is still concerned with Ben and believes his business success is hampered by an industry with a terrible business model:

“Ben in his letter to me states that his business is improving but says he hardly thinks yet that it pays expenses tho' his loss if any is not more than £1 per month he says the difficulty is getting a connection and avoiding bad debts: but if he gets a good connection he has no guarantee that the next grocer that comes may not take the connection from him as he must previously have done from some other grocer and thus keeping his income always low. My idea of a small grocery business in England is very poor for it seems to me that any man or woman with a small capital can set up to as much advantage as those who have served their apprenticeship to the trade consequently as soon as there is any profit to be made numbers rush in and glut the village. Now and then of course there will be places like Birkenhead where one or two first comers make their fortune by the extra rapid increase of the lower population and by the convenience of their stand and the knowledge of these few prizes hides the fact of the very numerous failures. I believe Mr. Bake never served an apprenticeship or Aunt Butterworth's sister.”⁵¹³

Meanwhile, he is surprised to hear from Ben that he is in good health despite the issues with his business. Thomas' own health is not so good:

“I had no idea that Ben was 29 years old last July till he told me. I am thinking it must require all the patience he can muster to face his slow

512 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Benjamin Waters. May 4, 1856.

513 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Elizabeth Waters. December 7, 1856.

improving business, there is one thing in his favour he says he has good health and no care or anxiety so he is far better off than me for my health is not very good and I am full of care and anxiety on account of my wife and children tho' should I die they will have enough to keep them comfortable that is if they are prudent."⁵¹⁴

Thomas gets to see sister Mary, now thirty-nine, who travels to visit him at Glasgow port, but he seems busy and in poor spirits, being preoccupied with his duties and his family. Here we get a glimpse into a merchant ship captain's responsibilities:

"I hope Mary had a safe return to Rochdale from Glasgow. I was very busy and not in the best of humours for it was just my busiest time and I was anxious to get every thing ready about the ship for sea and upon Sunday I was glad to lay down on my sofa tho' I used not to turn out till noon—brain work is more tiring than hand work. If my ship was a packet ship or a regular trader, I should not have much to do in port merely attend to the ship, but having a transient ship I have to be Captain at sea and agent ashore, look out for a good freight or charter and count up all the chances, which is not a very easy job."⁵¹⁵

Dreaming of being together

Even his new status and a fast ship aren't enough to keep Thomas from day-dreaming of a utopian world where his family might all be together on land in Nova Scotia, happily farming and raising children. He tells Ben, "Some day perhaps we will all travel on our own land in our own wagon or on our own legs, have our own house our own orchard our own garden and our own trout brook to fish in."⁵¹⁶

He has clearly spent a great deal of time thinking about this; in fact, he has a detailed plan, which he repeats in several letters. This first one, to Ben, describes his sense of the importance of family unity:

514 *ibid.*

515 *ibid.*

516 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Benjamin Waters. June 19, 1856.



The only known picture of Mary Waters, Thomas & Ben's oldest sister. Undated.

"I received your letter and Mary's yesterday and am glad to hear that your prospect is improving and am much obliged to you for the trouble you have taken to answer my questions. But somehow I still think we will live together before many years for even should you make 50£ per year it will take some time before you can own your own house and land. A man with a portion of money and health can live comfortably and be independent in Nova Scotia whereas in England he would be merely living. I am not trying to persuade you or advise you but "*Unity is strength*" and if we could both live together no matter in what country why we could help one another."⁵¹⁷

However, there is a bit of evidence that he and his sister Mary don't always get along, and he wouldn't want to live with her:

"Mary is a kind hearted sister but like me has a bad temper and I am afraid that if she was with or lived with me we would quarrel. I am afraid I would quarrel with her if she did not with me tho I know I love her as well as any sister. Remember me to her, and to Jenny and Nancy."⁵¹⁸

517 *ibid.*

518 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Benjamin Waters. July 8, 1856.

A month later he writes to his parents:

“Ben seems pleased with the idea of Nova Scotia—poor fellow he has struggled manfully against discouragement and has met with very very small reward and I am afraid is not likely to improve for I think he is breaking down thro’ hopelessness. Like the fable of a bundle of sticks if we keep together we will strengthen one another.

“I do not propose for Ben to go to Nova Scotia under the idea that I will help him but with the idea that we will help each other for I really think we can do well there. At any rate I will have a home ready for him which will save him some hard rubs and if he likes at any time he can return tho’ I do not think he will ever want to for if his taste is like mine.

“He will enjoy the country and the work will actually be half pleasure for when one sees a fair prospect ahead it enlivens the way to it. He writes to me much more cheerfully than he used and I think I see by his letters a liveliness that was wanting before, indeed he says he wishes the time to pass quick so that we can try our fortunes together.

“I can almost fancy now seeing Mary with my little ones in her arms and them calling her Aunty and Ben walking with me thro’ the woods and over our own farm watching squirrels [sic] and hares run by. I think we will realize peace and quietness with competence...”⁵¹⁹

Thomas’ wish to have his siblings move to Nova Scotia will never come to be and in fact, Mary’s life will end within two years. Four years after she had moved to Rawtenstall to help Ben, Mary marries John Harris on September 24, 1857, at the Register Office in the District of Haslingden, Lancashire. She is forty years old. Harris is a Quaker, a draper⁵²⁰ of Longholme, Rawtenstall, Lancashire. Their marriage is, sadly, short-lived—Mary dies the next year. There has been no additional information uncovered as to the circumstances of her death.

519 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. July 1856.

520 A draper, or linen draper, was a supervisor of the makers of woolen and other types of cloth since only they were allowed to buy from the manufacturers or to import it. The retail linen draper actually draped selected fabrics across his doorway so they could be seen and felt. Since ready-to-wear clothes were not readily available until the mid-19th century drapers were in great demand by seamstresses and tailors. For more: <https://tinyurl.com/28r8ynmd>.

Another gold rush

In the summer of 1856, Thomas writes to Ben "...Amy is very much dissatisfied about my going to Australia and is very uneasy."⁵²¹ Nonetheless, Thomas continues on from Scotland to Australia in July, with "a very valuable cargo this time."⁵²²

In a July 8 letter to brother Ben, he says, "There is already £200,000 insured upon only part of my cargo so when I sail I expect there will be to the value of £400,000 under my feet and command."⁵²³ This is a huge undertaking and a great responsibility—in today's terms, the value of Thomas' cargo would be £38,530,000.00.⁵²⁴

Thomas knows his wife is suffering, likely with depression, as did his mother when Thomas was a child and his father was at sea. In August he writes from Glasgow. Not only is he still concerned about his wife's mental well-being, but her physical health as well:

"I received a letter yesterday from Amy and from her letter I should suppose that she is lowspirited. She says she is not well and never expects to be any better, moreover, Mary is sick but Lizzie is very well. I send you enclosed the daguerreotype [sic] in hopes of soon seeing the originals. There is a disagreeable difference in Amy's looks but I hope she will improve in health and spirits. In the meantime write to her as often as you well can and oblige."⁵²⁵

Thomas is in the Melbourne port, Hobsons Bay, when he writes next on December 7. He is expecting to sail for Peru on the twentieth but won't end up leaving until Christmas Day. Meanwhile, he tells his parents of this new British colony of Australia, where a Gold Rush that will rival California's is in full swing:

"This is certainly a gold country and the best country for a sailor that ever I was to, that is for those sailors who like me can turn their hand to cooking, stevedoring, mining, etc. and can put up with any sort of sleeping accommodation or I should say no accommodation at all, but at the same time it is the most miserable country to live ashore in that ever I was in.

521 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Benjamin Waters. June 19, 1856.

522 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Benjamin Waters. July 8, 1856.

523 *ibid.*

524 Calculated using the relative value of commodities from 1856, tool at <https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/ukcompare/relativevalue.php>.

525 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. August 3, 1854.



Australian gold diggings, by Edwin Stocqueler, c. 1855, depicts the 1851 gold rush in Australia. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

“It is now here early summer and everything is dried up and the dust and hot winds are intolerable so that any man who stays here ought to get well paid if only for the misery he must suffer in living ashore. It certainly is not a country that I would recommend except to seafaring folks and they can take a trip to sea during the hot summer or muddy winter.

“The chief supports of life are not dear but those little things which add so much to comfort such as eggs, milk, etc. are enormously dear and the country and city is infested with the very worst kind of murderers and robbers, indeed the newspapers are all fill’d with their exploits.”⁵²⁶

Gold was discovered in Australia in the early 1850s, and the rush attracted hundreds of thousands. The population of Melbourne grew swiftly as the gold fever took hold. The total number of people in Victoria also rose; by 1851 it was 75,000 people, and only ten years later this rose to over 500,000.⁵²⁷

The *Sydney Herald* describes what the impact was on thousands of working men:

“The news spread like wildfire, and soon the race was on from coast to gold fields. Flocks were left untended, drovers deserted their teams,

526 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. December 7, 1856.

527 From *Victorian gold rush*, Wikipedia. Found 5/1/21 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victorian_gold_rush.

merchants and lawyers rushed from their desks and entire ships' crews, captains included, marched off to seek their fortunes."⁵²⁸

Thomas compares this frenzy in Australia to Nova Scotia, which:

"...after all for a quiet industrious man offers the greatest inducement to settlers of any country I know of, for there, anyone who is willing to work three days out of a week cannot starve. Indeed, I think any country is better than a gold digging country."⁵²⁹

True to his indifference to the lure of gold, Thomas does not go to visit any of the dig sites: "I have not been to the diggings for my time is occupied with business and it would take me three days to go, see, and return..."⁵³⁰

He is still thinking of his own family in Nova Scotia:

"...my health is not very good and I am full of care and anxiety on account of my wife and children tho' should I die they will have enough to keep them comfortable that is if they are prudent."⁵³¹

Thomas doesn't describe what is wrong in any detail, so we are left to wonder. He ends this long missive with, "Don't answer with letters for when they arrive here I will be somewhere else..."⁵³²

This is the last letter we know of from Thomas until May 6, 1860, when he will write from the Chinchas Islands.

528 *In The Paths of The Explorers Gold Brings Australia Wealth. The Sydney Morning Herald.* November 20, 1946. P. 3. Supplement: *Playtime*. Found via National Library of Australia.

529 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. December 7, 1856.

530 *ibid.*

531 *ibid.*

532 *ibid.*

Chapter 19

The Long Road to Love

IT IS THOMAS JR. AND BENJAMIN who will carry the Waters line forward to its next generation through their children. In 1860, Ben takes his turn at marriage and starts his own family, and younger sister Elizabeth finally finds love as well, marrying a fascinating and somewhat famous character.

Benjamin is wed on June 26, 1860, a decade after his older brother Thomas, and just in time, it seems. Sheila Turvey describes Benjamin as being “rescued by marriage”⁵³³ to Barbara Bake, a thirty-five-year-old spinster who is also a Quaker, as is her family. The witnesses are Benjamin Bake, his new brother-in-law (under whom Benjamin had apprenticed, and whose grocery business he would inherit) and George Butterworth, one of his maternal Lancashire relations.

Barbara Bake

Barbara’s father, Nathan Bake, had owned a corn and flax mill at Darley in Wharfedale, Yorkshire, and had been a yeoman farmer at Clockansike, a farm on the hill overlooking Darley Mills. His wife, Elizabeth, was a Quaker. Nathan’s brother, Amos, shared his activities at the farm and the mills. The name *Bake* was common in the parish of Hampsthwaite, where the mill was located, and in the parish of (Dacre) Ripon, where the farm lay, so the family had been established in the region for a long time.

In 1828, when Barbara Bake is nearly three, her father dies. She is one of eleven children, the youngest of whom is born months after the father dies.

The older children, boys, become a flax spinner, a flour merchant and baker, a tea dealer and grocer, and an engine driver.

The younger children, when they are old enough, are sent with the help of the Society of Friends to the Friends' School at Ackworth. Elizabeth (13) and Amos (11) go in 1835, to be succeeded after their mother also dies in 1837 by Barbara (12), Mark (11), and Hannah (9).

The regime at Ackworth is grim, and shapes Barbara's life and worldview. There are no holidays; children simply stay until they reached the age of fourteen. Meals are eaten in silence, a breakfast of milk porridge poured on bread, a dinner of porridge with bread, with poor quality small beer as drink. A single oil-lamp lights the gloomy dining-rooms until gas-lighting is introduced in 1838, and a single wick dipped in sheep-fat lights the huge dormitories. The "light & airies" are solitary confinement rooms, not abolished till 1846. The children's clothes do not keep them warm in winter. They are occasionally marched to old spring water baths for the only washing they receive. The school water supply is infected and the earth closets insanitary, with the result that there are frequent epidemics of typhus and scarlatina. "Please will you shorten my time," a child writes home, "as it seems as if it will never pass away."⁵³⁴

Mark, Barbara's younger brother, perishes under this harsh regime from "water on the chest," just after his fourteenth birthday. Hannah dies of tuberculosis soon after she leaves Ackworth.⁵³⁵

But Barbara survives. She has learned to knit and sew, and has been taught reading, spelling, grammar, writing, geography, and arithmetic. Her hard childhood because of her father's early death and her rigid educational experience have developed her into a young woman of extraordinary fortitude. She joins her twin elder brothers, Benjamin and Joseph, who have become respectively a tea-dealer and a flour-dealer in Birkenhead.

Here she meets their apprentice, Benjamin Waters. When she marries Benjamin in 1860, Barbara has enough strength of character for them both. Eventually she bestows on Benjamin her brother's successful business at the corner of Monk Street and Chester Street, and together they will raise four children—Thomas (b. 1861), Elizabeth May⁵³⁶ (b. 1863), the third family Amaret

⁵³⁴ *The Waters Family, Volume IV*. Turvey, Sheila. P. 17.

⁵³⁵ *ibid.*

⁵³⁶ Though this is her given first name, Elizabeth only ever goes by "May."



The earliest picture of Barbara (Bake) Waters. She is holding Thomas Jr. as an infant. Early 1860s.



The children of Benjamin and Barbara (Bake) Waters. Baby Edith and Elizabeth "May" are on either side of Thomas Jr. Amaret "Amy" is in front. 1871.

"Amy" (b. 1866) and Edith (b. 1868). Of these four children, only Amy and Edith will have children to carry on the Waters name.

An infamous character: Rev. Thomas Pyne

Thomas and Elizabeth Waters' daughter Elizabeth (affectionately also called Betsey or Lizzie) becomes a teacher and in 1860 she marries the significantly older Reverend Thomas Pyne, the Vicar of Hook. She is thirty and he is sixty. Betsey is Pyne's second wife.

Thomas Pyne was of a family whose long genealogy was published in 1915.⁵³⁷ He had been educated at Cambridge, graduating in 1823 from St. John's College, and had become a somewhat controversial figure in the American colonies before Elizabeth married him. He had written a treatise called *Vital Magnetism* and was a practitioner of distance faith healing.

Pyne had lived and worked in New York for three years as first rector of the Calvary Church in Brooklyn in 1833, and rector of St. Peter's Church in

537 Amusingly, Sheila Turvey writes, one branch of this family was the "Pyne-Coffins."



These two undated photographs appear side by side in a family album from the early 1860s. On the left is the Rev. Thomas Pyne, and though it's not possible to be certain, it is probably his much younger wife, Elizabeth (Waters) Pyne on the right, with one of their children.

New York City from 1834-1836. He had to resign his pulpit in New York and return to England because he alluded to the subject of slavery in a controversial Thanksgiving sermon. His vestry was about to build a new church and was afraid that an abolitionist rector would hurt their secular interests.

His sermon made a point that is as relevant today as it was then:

“America is emphatically the stranger’s home...Here do we meet from every tribe and kingdom...may these privileges be extended to all classes throughout the earth; and may the great family of man...be united in one triumphant jubilee...with glad hope, for a common heaven.”⁵³⁸

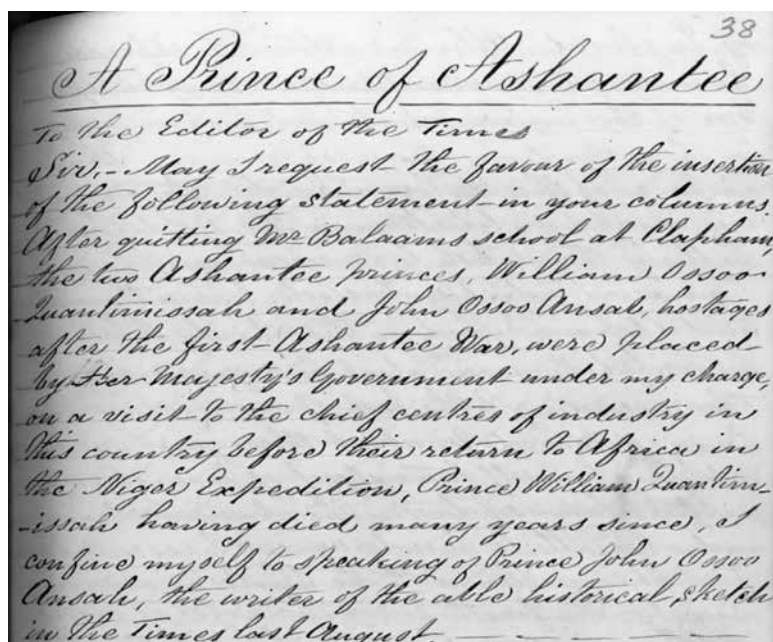
In this sermon, Rev. Pyne clearly foresaw, thirty years before it happened, the Civil War the States would fight on the slavery issue. So, in the period when Elizabeth’s father Captain Thomas Sr. was policing the coast of Africa as a Royal Marines Officer to prevent the slave trade, her future husband was also deeply involved in the issue.

538 *A Troublesome Thanksgiving Sermon*, Ryan, G. *The Episcopal New Yorker*. Found 1/28/2021 at http://www.evergreeneditions.com/publication/?m=14595&i=427324&view=articleBrowser&article_id=2844858.

Pyne returned to England in 1836 and eventually became Rector of Hook Surrey, where he would remain until his death. Shortly after returning, he received a special assignment which would connect him again, indirectly, to his future father-in-law: Pyne also had contact with members of the Ashanti people, and not just people—but royalty.

The princes of Ashanti

Pyne became the guardian of two princes from the Gold Coast, (John) Ossoo Ansah, son of the reigning king of Ashanti, and his cousin (William) Quanti Massah. The princes had been sent as hostages under a peace treaty of 1831 between the Ashantis and the British government and it was felt that they would benefit from a trip to England, including its manufacturing towns.⁵³⁹ He would write a fascinating account of their trip and publish it as an editorial in *The Times* of London on September 13, 1873.



38

A Prince of Ashantee

To the Editor of *The Times*

Sir,—May I request the favour of the insertion of the following statement in your columns. After quitting Mr Balaam's school at Clapham the two Ashantee princes, William Ossoo-Quantinissah and John Ossoo Ansah, hostages after the first Ashantee War, were placed by Her Majesty's Government under my charge, on a visit to the chief centres of industry in this country before their return to Africa in the Niger Expedition, Prince William Quantinissah having died many years since, I confine myself to speaking of Prince John Ossoo Ansah, the writer of the able historical sketch in *The Times* last August.

A possible transcription of Rev. Pyne's editorial in *The Times* in 1873 found in the Waters Family Scrapbook.

539 Correspondence and accounts of Thomas Pyne, School of Oriental and African Studies Archives, University of London. Found 1/25/21 at <https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/search/archives/28c59968-664b-39ad-b9c0-868164b10959>.

Reverend Pyne was also a delegate to the Frankfort General Peace Convention in 1850 and had written pamphlets against capital punishment.

Activism is part of the Pynes' life

After their marriage in 1860, the Pynes got straight to the business of having children. There was Elizabeth Rosanna "Rosa" (b. 1861); Agnes Bonville (b. 1862); Percy Thomas (b. 1863); Julia Caroline (b. 1865) and Reginald "Reggie" Gaynesford (b. 1867).⁵⁴⁰

In addition to being a mother, Lizzie appears to also join her husband's activism. In August 1864, they attend the 30th Peace & Temperance Festival at Hartwell, Buckinghamshire. Sheila Turvey wrote:

"He [Rev. Pyne] was an official of the Peace and Temperance movement, which held an annual festival in the grounds of Hartwell House, near Aylesbury; it was a very progressive anti-Tory group and Elizabeth joined in its activities which involved also campaigning for Civil and Religious Liberty, Female Rights, the Abolition of Slavery throughout the world, and education on the health hazards of tobacco."⁵⁴¹

In a *Record of the Proceedings of the Hartwell Peace and Temperance Festival* from 1857-64, we learn specifics of the Reverend's relationship to the annual event.

Each year's event consisted of a number of speakers over a two-day period, beginning with the event's host, Dr. Lee, who opens up the grounds of his estate, to the audiences, and his mansion, Hartwell House, to the speaker guests and their spouses.

It seems the group were also lobbyists to their elected officials. Dr. Lee opens each year's event with a lengthy political speech, commenting on the state of world affairs. His speech is followed by more lengthy speeches from the core people asked to speak each year, which include the Rev. Pyne, and guest speakers from other parts of the country and the world. He is also at least two times elected President of the festival, in 1849 and 1853. In the second year, two of the guest speakers were an M.P. and "Mr. Wells Brown, an escaped slave" who also related his experience.⁵⁴²

⁵⁴⁰ *The Waters Family, Volume IV*. Turvey, Sheila. P. 17.

⁵⁴¹ *ibid.* P. 19.

⁵⁴² *Introduction. Report of the Proceedings of the Hartwell Peace & Temperance Festival. 1864*. P. 8.

Though many of the speeches are quite serious in tone, the Rev. also makes room for the odd bit of humour. He seems especially fond of puns, as evident in this report, where three are cleverly woven into his remarks:

“Dr. Lee expressed his cordial concurrence in the motion, and his regret that the differences now submitted to the sword and bayonet had not been referred to arbitration. He thought that the Peace Society of America might have been safely entrusted with the settlement of the question, and declared that if that Society should call to its counsels a deputation from the Peace Society of England, he should be happy to accompany Mr. Edmund Fry and the Rev. Mr. Pyne, or any other members who might be selected for that important embassy.

The Rev. Thomas Pyne seconded the motion, playfully observing that he thought if the matter were left to the gentlemen suggested by Dr. Lee that they would make a pretty Fry of it. At the same time, as he had formerly advised the men of Aylesbury to bury their ales in Temperance, and the inhabitants of Hartwell to keep their hearts well fixed on their great object, so he would now declare (bowing to Mr. Noble) his unabated attachment to that noble cause. Friends from Thame might be present, but he was sure Dr. Lee had no tame friends to Temperance and Peace.”⁵⁴³

Each day the festival closes with games and refreshments on the estate’s grounds, and the speakers and their spouses retired to Hartwell House for a dinner, where more speeches were given.

By 1864, the event has grown to an attendance of 1,700, including some 400 members of the “Band of Hope,” children who have pledged to their parents never to drink. A few years prior, the proceedings had recorded the Rev. Pyne’s views on them:

“The Rev. T. Pyne thought that the Band of Hope was the hope of the country, as the places of the more advanced in life must be filled, very soon, by the rising generation; and if they were sober and thoughtful boys and girls, as a natural consequence they would grow up to be sober and thoughtful men and women. They were, therefore, anxious to give them the best possible advice, and that advice was to entirely reject the use of intoxicating drinks, &c. He considered it their duty to do so, and to do all in their power to

543 *Report of the Proceedings of the Hartwell Peace & Temperance Festival*. 1861.P. 64-5.

limit the use of arms for the slaying of their fellow creatures, for it was the duty of mankind, instead of killing each other, to love as brethren; and he longed for the time to come when there would be universal peace. He was sure that temperance was one of the greatest blessing to mankind, and was productive of the greatest happiness next to Christianity.”⁵⁴⁴

A poet laureate

In addition to having twice been nominated President of the festival, the Rev. Pyne also brings an original poem to the annual event, which is printed in the event’s report. He wasn’t only speaker on temperance every year, but also the Festival’s poet laureate. His poems were all focused on the subjects at hand for the festival. One grim piece on the suicide of a woman whose life was ruined by drink; another on the virtues of water, and one in 1863 on the Festival itself, shown below.



REV. THOMAS PYNE, VICAR OF HOOK.

On the left is a sketch of Rev. Pyne that appeared in the 1861 Record of Proceedings of the Peace & Temperance Festival. On the right is a portion of his poem for 1863.

HARTWELL FESTIVAL, 1863.

BY A HEART'S WELL-WISHER.

Oh ! God of grace, who dost bestow
Thy favour on our smiling land—
Causing our cup to overflow
With varied mercies from Thy hand—
Give us this good, beyond compare,
Thy love to own in all we share.

Make us more grateful for each gift,
More studious to improve life's hours ;
May all we have our spirits lift
To Thee, the source of all their powers ;
Keep us from sin and evil free,
And may we find our joy in Thee !

May true religion, like the dew,
With silent force pour blessings round,
Instruction every child renew,
And faith and hope like flowers abound ;
Be vice—with penury and crime,
Her offspring—rooted from our clime.

These virtues to our race impart ;—
Meekness with courage—love with zeal—
The modest mind—the simple heart—
Till earth our patient labours feel ;
Their hues may Peace and Temperance blend,
A radiant bow in heaven to end.

Such good, sweet Hartwell, ever rest
Upon thy sylvan festival ;
The portion fair of every guest,
And chiefly on the youthful fall ;
And may the honour'd founder, LEE,
Long live the golden fruit to see !

T. PYNE.

544 *Report of the Proceedings of the Hartwell Peace & Temperance Festival. 1861.* P. 53-4.

Pyne loved the Festival, and was asked about it in 1863:

“The Rev. Thos. Pyne would remark the pleasure it had given him for so many years to attend these annual gatherings. The fair scenery—the modest, but beautiful church among the trees—the venerable mansion, with the kind, hospitable, erudite and gentle owner, the descendant of a long line of courtly knights and baronets—the vast assembly of people, so peaceful and so happy, bent on pleasure, but not transgressing innocence—all conjoined to make this simple festival one of the most interesting occasions which he was ever called to witness, and he would add, long might this ancient hall, adorned as it was with the flags of many nations, be visited with such associations, and the grand old trees look down upon such peaceful scenes, and the sweet greensward rise as it did in fresh fragrance, trodden by the many feet of cheerful age and well-promising youth.

“...he could only state that as the years passed he was but the more attached to the sacred cause of Peace and Temperance.”⁵⁴⁵

Thinking of home

It seems that the Reverend had wanted Lizzie to come with him to this wonderful event; that somehow it would do her good. During their stay at Hartwell House, the Reverend writes home to their servant, Philly, mentioning this, and also clearly missing their children:

“My good Philly.

“We arrived here safely last night at 10 minutes before ten. after a very pleasant journey. It rained for the first 4 hours more or less: but after our stop at Uxbridge, where we were very glad of the nice sandwiches & pudding, we set off at 1. and a quarter to Amersham & arrived there at 4 and drank tea & stayed till 6. Then on to Hartwell: and there had been no rain there & this morning is very fine.

“I hope things are all well at home, and our darling little pets we know are kindly & lovingly taken care of. We long to see them. But I trust our brief absence will be a benefit to us both, especially to my dear Wife.

“I will write again tomorrow, and tell you when to expect us.

“With blessings on our little lambs and on all in our home.

“Your faithful friend & Master

Tho^s. Pyne

“I forgot to tell Eliza—I generally keep Baby in the bath about two minutes. & rub him well afterwards with a towel. –& Eliza can take him out a clean quilt for his bassinet—I do hope Baby is safe. I kept awake a long while last night thinking of all the accidents that might happen to him but I am quite sure Eliza will take care of him, she is so kind.”⁵⁴⁶

546 *Letter*. Thomas Pyne to servant Philly. August 24, 1864. “Eliza” likely references their niece Elizabeth, daughter of Thomas Jr. and Amy Waters.

Chapter 20

The Waters Family Goes to Sea

SHIP CAPTAINS HAD THE OPTION of bringing their families along on voyages and in 1858, Thomas decides to do just that.

Thomas' father never took his family aboard ship—since he was often engaged in military conflict with other ships it wouldn't have been safe for a woman and children. Still, merchant ships, while not at war or patrolling, were just as vulnerable to typical marine dangers such as storms, shipboard accidents, illness, and disease. Regardless, Thomas and Amy decide that these risks are worth being together, and they often travel together, leaving their two eldest daughters (Elizabeth and Mary) with Thomas' family in England where they are taught by Thomas' sisters, who have a school.

Tom's youngest sisters grow up

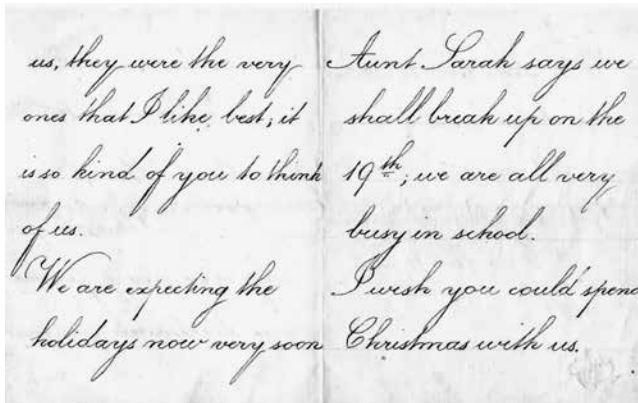
In 1861, twenty-six-year-old Sarah Waters, is an unmarried schoolmistress at 2 Ewell Road Villa, Kingston, with a servant and three boarding scholars in their teens.

Also living with her are two nieces from Nova Scotia: Thomas and Amy's daughters, Eliza Waters (9) and Mary Waters (7), both "scholars" (meaning that they were students).⁵⁴⁷ As Christmas 1861 nears, Lizzie writes a sweet little letter to her Uncle Ben with elegant handwriting for a nine-year-old girl:

547 *The Waters Family. Volume IV.* Turvey, Sheila. P.20. In another of the many confusing family name conundrums, this Elizabeth is called both "Lizzie" and "Eliza"; Mary is also sometimes called "May."



Sarah Waters at age 26 is a schoolmistress whose students included her brother Tom's children, Elizabeth and Mary Waters.



Lizzie Waters (left) seems to be very mature for a nine-year-old girl. A portion of her letter to her Uncle Ben (right) shows beautiful handwriting and perfect grammar, including two uses of the semi-colon...the first seen in hand-written family correspondence.

“Dear Uncle Ben,

“I thank you very very much for the nice sweetmeats you sent us, they were the very ones that I like best; it is so kind of you to think of us.

“We are expecting the holidays now very soon and Aunt Sarah says we shall break up on the 19th; we are all very busy in school.

“I wish you could spend Christmas with us.

“With dear love to Aunt Barbara and you

“I remain,

Your affectionate Niece,

Elizabeth Waters”⁵⁴⁸

Script in a family scrapbook that is believed to be Ben’s explains why Eliza and Mary were staying with their aunt during this time:

“...two daughters named Lizzie and May were brought up and educated by my Sisters at their school in Surbiton as Mrs. T.W. used to accompany her husband at sea for the first few years...”⁵⁴⁹

In 1866 Sarah apparently also has a “museum,” though there is no additional information as to what kind of museum it might be.⁵⁵⁰ Perhaps some of these items might have been from gifts brought back from her father’s travels when he was at sea, but we know for certain that brother Thomas and Amy contribute to the museum from their travels from part of a sentence in an 1866 letter: “alongside of them two butterflies and an African grasshopper that came on board off the Cape de Verde. I am preserving them for Sarah’s museum...”⁵⁵¹

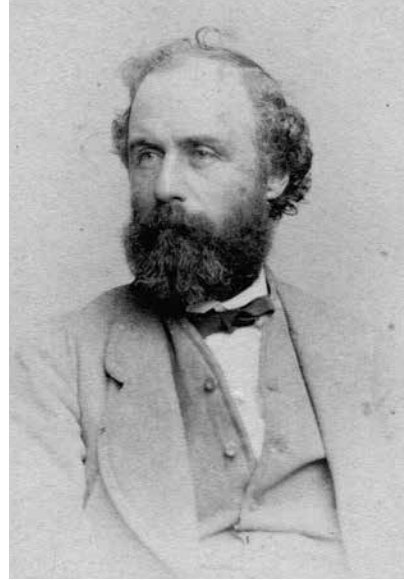
On their first family voyage, Thomas and Amy take their two youngest daughters, Alice and Amy, on a long journey around the Cape of Good Hope and up the South American coast. Two boys are born at sea. Thomas is born at anchor between the north and middle Chincha Islands off the coast of Peru on September 9, 1858. John will be born two and a half years later, on June 8, 1861, at anchor off Paquinch, St. Francisco off what was at that time the west coast of Bolivia.

548 Letter. Elizabeth “Lizzie” Waters to her Uncle Benjamin Waters. December 10, 1861.

549 Waters Family Scrapbook. Multiple authors. P. 15.

550 *ibid.*

551 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. Christmas 1866 (no date).



ABOVELEFT Elizabeth and Mary Waters, eldest children of Thomas Jr. and Amy. 1861.

ABOVERIGHT Thomas Waters Jr. 1861.

RIGHT Amy Waters with her children. L to R: Amy, Thomas Jr., baby John, Alice. 1861.



Politics & earthquakes

While still in the Chinchas in May of 1860, Thomas writes his parents, describing the state of things in Peru:

“There is every appearance here in Peru of another revolution in the miserable government, their men of war are here at the Chinchas with steam up constantly expecting a break out and ready to join the side that offers the highest bid.

“We have had several very severe earthquakes, shook the ship fearfully and tumbled some of the cliffs on the islands down and I hear that in Lima the inhabitants are camp’d in the open square as all their houses have been more or less damaged and the hotel where Amy and I stayed last voyage is badly damaged and the shocks are still felt. Consequently the people are expecting more damage and throng their churches where the priests gather a rich harvest.”⁵⁵²

In the same letter, Thomas describes how he’s spending his time while waiting to ship off to Callao:

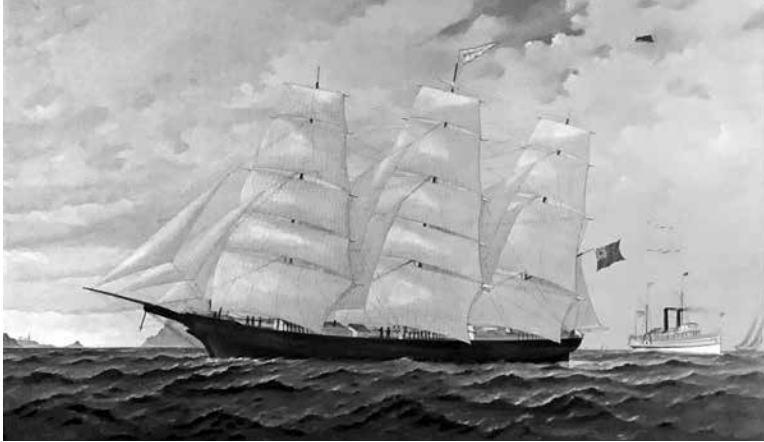
“I went out sea lion hunting with some American Captains a few days ago and got a good ducking and lost my gun and very near lost myself. We got too near the rocks and the surf capsized the boat and I had to practise my swimming rather more than was pleasant. That is the only accident I have met with hunting and I have been out a good many times and only accompanied that hunting party after a good deal of pressing from the Americans who wanted me to pilot them as I am pretty well experienced and never before had a mishap. But you know familiarity with danger breeds contempt for it and so it proved, for I had been so used to going close to the surf that I finally went too close, tho a little carelessness on the part of one of the crew hastened the event. When I was here some time ago seven men were drowned in the surf while out hunting indeed accidents are occuring [sic] almost daily, but fools learn by experience so I will take more care next time.

“We have had several fine balls in the fleet lately to all of which I went and enjoyed them much. I wish Amy was with me because I know she would have been much pleased.”⁵⁵³

552 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. May 6, 1860.

553 *ibid.*

On May 19, the *New York Times* would write that “Business is very dull in Callao. There are a good many vessels at the Chincha Islands loading guano, principally at a freight of \$15, and numbers are arriving every day.”⁵⁵⁴ One of those ships is *Bethiah Jewett*, an 1,103 tons burthen ship built in New Brunswick in 1856.



An unknown artist's painting of *Bethiah Jewett*, owned by Edith Waters of Philadelphia, granddaughter of Captain Thomas Waters Jr. After her death, the painting was given to Thomas Hewson, the great-great grandson of Captain Thomas Waters Jr.

Thomas writes from Callao on May 20, where they have arrived two days prior, about different kinds of dangers in Lima:

“Lima has had quite a severe shaking and there has been two or three shakes since I arrived here but the city is not hurt so much as I expected, which the pious Peruvians attribute to the intervention of their priests who form bare footed processions and with lighted tapers and a few wooden saints carried on their shoulders walk the streets day and nights.

“The last severe earthquake here the sea rushed in and overwhelmed Callao the dreary ruins of which reach down to the water's edge and a great part is still fathoms under the sea but the part that is above water presents a most horrible aspect on account of the immense amount of human remains scattered and in large heaps among the ruins.

“It seems as if the crowded churches had tumbled down on the worshippers and all had perished and so they remain to this day, their broken bones bleaching in the broken churches and the whole presents (tho within the

length of your garden from the crowded new Callao) a complete picture of desolation and death. Nothing green grows over the place except here and there a running weed and the old church vaults form capital retreats for the huge rats that infest the ruins.”⁵⁵⁵

But apparently the people still go about their business, as he describes:

“However the people don’t seem to care much for they throng the theatre and race course and Sunday is a favourite day for bull fighting, there is to be a grand one to day (Sunday) to which my agent has strongly invited me to go to as he has reserved a seat in his private box for me but I never leave my ship on Sunday except on very urgent and extremely rare cases.”⁵⁵⁶

Thomas has had to throw overboard some heavy and low-value gifts he and Amy purchased on the previous voyage, intended for his sister Lizzie:

“Amy and I last voyage collected quite a lot of curiosities, petrifications, rough coral, incrustations and other heavy things (expecting to go to England) for Liz to adorn her garden walks or make a grotto with but I have been so disappointed that I have thrown them overboard as they cumbered the cabin too much and except as curiosities they were of no value but of great weight and bulk. We got quite a variety of calabashes most of which are still on board and if we get to England soon Liz may probably get them. Amy and I were calculating to surprise Liz with our collection for her and we agreed not to mention about it in any of our letters but it is so very uncertain when the ship may go again to England that I had to throw the heavy things overboard.”⁵⁵⁷

By the fall, Thomas has rounded the Cape again and is back in the Cove of Cork doing repairs to the ship, which has been through a frightful hurricane encountered the previous week:

“I encountered a hurricane 6 days ago and lost all my topsails etc. and a man overboard and 2 others got legs broken. I picked up 9 men who had

555 Earthquakes in Peru are common occurrences as the country is located in a seismic zone. Earthquakes occur as thrust faulting on the interface between two tectonic plates, the South American Plate and the Nazca Plate. Founded in 1535, Lima has been destroyed by earthquakes three times, in 1586, 1687 and 1746. The one Thomas writes about occurred on April 22, 1860, just before 2 p.m. and lasted 80 seconds. Some 50 aftershocks occurred in the next 72 hours. Nearly every structure in Lima was damaged or destroyed, and losses in Lima were estimated at \$1 million.

556 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. May 6, 1860.

557 *ibid.*

been wrecked, capsized and waterlogg'd and had been 8 days without food or water—poor fellows they are mere skeletons, their Captain and 2 of the crew were drowned. I have made a very fast passage, beat all the other ships, but I have lost much canvas and many spars. We fell in with plenty of ice (August) off Cape Horn and I came pretty near being washed overboard, never nearer in my life as a heavy sea pooped us and did us much damage.”⁵⁵⁸

By the following Christmas, he has rounded the Cape and is heading up the east coast of South America. He spends the holiday off River Plate, a large estuary between Argentina and Uruguay known as Rio de la Plata. He hopes to be back to celebrate Christmas with his whole family together, but it's not to be.

Bad winter weather in the English Channel keeps Thomas and *Bethiah Jewett* in port at Havre, France through the Christmas holiday. He writes to Amy from a hotel there on December 29. In this letter he reminisces about all the Christmases past since he has been at sea, and it is an apt summary of a seafarer's nomadic life:

“I have been thinking of the different parts of the world in which I have spent my last twenty Xmas's and perhaps you or the others may feel amused at the recital tho' my memory is so bad that I may possibly make here and there a mistake.

“1861—Havre, France; 60 off river Plate; 59 off Cape Horn; 58 crossing the Equator; 57 English Channel; 56 Melbourne, Australia; 55 Home Digby N.S.; 54 HOME OLD ENGLAND; 53 off Newfoundland; 52 Home Digby N.S.; 51 Home Digby N.S.; 50 wrecked close where the steamer Hungarian was lost; 49 off Sable island (half pint water per day for about three weeks); 48 the famine year Galway Ireland; 47 most miserable of all laid up in a sailor's den Liverpool; 46 driven by a tremendous gale under the lea of Cape Chapeau Rouge Newfoundland for refuge—any port in a storm—short of provisions a very mouldy biscuit and a spoonful of grease for a day's allowance; 45 Baltimore yellow fever hospital with small pox Cap't. dead and a cart load of coffins in sight for Xmas boxes; 44 Staten Island New York drafted to shovel snow from railway track; 43 Talcahuana Chili adrift with a broken leg; 42 Coast of Japan chasing sperm whales one man killed five badly hurt.”⁵⁵⁹

558 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. October 12, 1860.

559 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Amy Waters. December 29, 1861. The entire list of Christmases is in the family archive at mywatersfamily.com.

As for this Christmas, Thomas is adrift, missing his family, losing money while detained in port and unsure of his next destination:

“I miss you a good deal and will be glad when my cargo is out so that I can enjoy your company again. The detention here is cutting the profits of the voyage down fast. Three thousand dollars gone already, but I have plenty of brother sufferers as sixty more large ships are in the same fix...

“I think the ship will likely go to Cardiff or Newport thence to Halifax or Bermuda or if I can get an East India charter to pay I should prefer it, but I am waiting for the news from U. States—war or no war, which will make a vast difference in sea affairs.”⁵⁶⁰

Back to Australia

On Sunday, February 16, 1862, as captain of *Bethiah Jewett*, Captain Waters again travels with his wife, two sons, and two younger daughters on a voyage from England back to Australia, while the older daughters (Elizabeth and Mary) stay with Thomas’ family in England.

The six-month voyage to Sydney is a difficult one for many reasons. First, they encounter a serious winter gale after passing the Orkney Islands described as “heavy seas and a miscellaneous assortment of rain, snow, hail, and sleet.” Two men are lost overboard, and some livestock are drowned in their pens. Thomas describes the scene:

“The ship was rather badly damaged, struck by a sea which stove in 35 feet of our upper works, causing our gaping seams to swallow water faster than our pumps doubly mann’d could free us, finding the water fast gaining on us I gave orders to lighten the ship by throwing cargo overboard which helped us some, but the storm abating helped us the most; we battened tarr’d canvas over the seams and I proceeded on our voyage glad at having escaped foundering, but much to the disappointment of the crew who wished and expected me to put into port for repairs as they dreaded the Cape of Good Hope in a crippled ship, but I have confidence in the staunchness of the ship and moreover a captain soon loses his good

560 *ibid.* The “war” is the Civil War, which officially began at the Battle of Fort Sumter in Charleston Bay on April 12, 1861. For more: Civil War, from America’s Library at http://www.americaslibrary.gov/jb/civil/jb_civil_subj.html.

INWARD.

A LIST of the Crew and Passengers, arrived in the Ship *Patrick Stewart* of *St Johns* N.S.W. Master, *Thos. Waters*
 Burthen, *102* Tons, from the Port of *London* direct to *Sydney*, New South Wales, *28 July* 1862.

Passenger's Name	Rank	Age	At what Station	Name of Passenger	Description	Remarks
<i>John Moore</i>	<i>Master</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>Edgb.</i>			
<i>Wm. Thompson</i>	<i>Boatman</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>W.P. Manning</i>	<i>Mrs Waters</i>		
<i>George Coleman</i>	<i>Boatman</i>	<i>38</i>		<i>2 Sons</i>		
<i>W. Williams</i>	<i>Cook</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>St Johns</i>	<i>2 Daughters</i>		
<i>Samuel Hobbins</i>	<i>Boatman</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>Wingate</i>			
<i>James Johnson</i>	<i>Cook</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>Wingate</i>			
<i>James Brown</i>	<i>CD</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>London</i>			
<i>Abraham Allen</i>	<i>CD</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>Edgb.</i>			
<i>William Hall</i>	<i>CD</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>London</i>			
<i>John Morgan</i>		<i>20</i>	<i>London</i>			
<i>John Brown</i>		<i>23</i>	<i>Edgb.</i>			
<i>George Johnson</i>		<i>25</i>	<i>Edgb.</i>			
<i>David Lee</i>		<i>21</i>	<i>London</i>			
<i>Edward Lee</i>		<i>22</i>	<i>Edgb.</i>			
<i>Thomas Lee</i>		<i>23</i>				
<i>John Lee</i>		<i>24</i>	<i>London</i>			
<i>John Lee</i>		<i>25</i>	<i>Edgb.</i>			
<i>John Lee</i>		<i>26</i>	<i>Edgb.</i>			
<i>John Lee</i>		<i>27</i>	<i>Edgb.</i>			
<i>John Lee</i>		<i>28</i>	<i>Edgb.</i>			
<i>John Lee</i>		<i>29</i>	<i>Edgb.</i>			
<i>John Lee</i>		<i>30</i>	<i>Edgb.</i>			
<i>John Lee</i>		<i>31</i>	<i>Edgb.</i>			
<i>John Lee</i>		<i>32</i>	<i>Edgb.</i>			
<i>John Lee</i>		<i>33</i>	<i>Edgb.</i>			
<i>John Lee</i>		<i>34</i>	<i>Edgb.</i>			
<i>John Lee</i>		<i>35</i>	<i>Edgb.</i>			
<i>John Lee</i>		<i>36</i>	<i>Edgb.</i>			
<i>John Lee</i>		<i>37</i>	<i>Edgb.</i>			
<i>John Lee</i>		<i>38</i>	<i>Edgb.</i>			
<i>John Lee</i>		<i>39</i>	<i>Edgb.</i>			
<i>John Lee</i>		<i>40</i>	<i>Edgb.</i>			

Sydney, July 28, 1862
Thomas Waters
Master

A copy of the handwritten crew and passenger list for the 1862 voyage to Sydney, Australia that the Waters family took together. In the fifth column, you see under the Names of Passengers the reference to "Mrs. Waters, 2 Sons, 2 Daughters." In the bottom right corner is written "Sydney, July 28, 1862, Thomas Waters, Master."

name if he runs into port without dire necessity compels, as it brings great expense on the ship, cargo and underwriters.”⁵⁶¹

This incident was followed by another, and opposite kind of problem—a long calm:

“We have had the longest calm that I ever experienced—40 days in which we only advanced a few miles, we were on the line⁵⁶² and it rained day after day causing some sickness among the crew, but the children stood the climate first rate, they have all been very healthy tho’ we have had a very very long passage.”⁵⁶³

The voyage was perhaps the most difficult for Amy, who is pregnant and tragically miscarries twin boys around July 6, near the end of the trip:

“Poor Amy, 140 days after leaving Sunderland and just at my most anxious time, making the land was at hand, miscarried twins and suffered

561 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. August 20, 1862.
 562 “The line” is a common nautical nickname for the Equator.
 563 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. August 20, 1862.

very much as we encountered very severe storms both before and after and during the occurrence.”⁵⁶⁴

How terrible must it have been for Amy to miscarry twins during a severe storm at sea. With no doctor aboard, and a busy husband working to make landfall in Sydney Harbour, who would have looked after her and helped with the birth?

The older children may have survived well according to Thomas’ estimation, but he had to admit it was difficult:

“Little Johnny likewise came in for his share of the hard times cutting his teeth, getting weaned and no proper food, and very improper nurses—a sailor servant boy and myself, the boy washed and dressed, fed and changed him, I tried it twice and I declare tho’ it was cold weather 50° S. Latitude I fairly perspired, the little fellow suffered a good deal and cried every night till his Mother got well, Alice was some help to us...”⁵⁶⁵

And Thomas had no easy time of it either. In fact, before all this, he had to deal with a mutinous bunch of sailors he had acquired in New York who held him at gunpoint on the voyage from America to France! Here is his remarkable account of a captain’s worst nightmare:

“Bad sailors are my greatest annoyance. The English laws seem to suppose that all common seamen are good men, and all Captains and officers bad men. The crew that I brought from New York were very very bad, the war in the United States and the bitter hatred there to anything English forced me to take the scum of all the bad sailors.

“I tried fair means with them first, but found it useless as most of them were armed with revolvers and all with large sheath knives so they deemed themselves beyond control and refused duty as soon as they came on board.

“I tried to reason with them, but they pointed a couple of pistols at me and declared in very unpolite words that they would not work till they pleased, but I got some assistance from the harbour authorities and after a little resistance in which the revenue officers and my chief mate got badly cut and myself slightly, we secured half the crew in iron and with a steam tug ahead proceeded to sea where I adopted means to bring the mutineers to duty and I had little trouble till we arrived in Havre when of course they deserted.

564 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. August 20, 1862.

565 *ibid.*

“As they had received two months’ pay in advance and had only been 25 days on board so that they gained over a month’s pay, however one got drowned and the others as they were such very bad characters even the low sailors’ boarding house would not take them in. Consequently, they prowled the streets begging and stealing and eight or nine are now in some French prison, but I am sorry to say the ringleader escaped back to America—at least I recognized him on board an outward bound ship from Havre. He was the vagabond who stopped me twice in Havre in the low neighbourhood which generally surrounds docks, and I believe would have murdered me had not assistance opportunely arrived.

“However, after the second attack, I applied to the police and I got permission to carry a revolver which shielded me from further trouble, but it is a great bother carrying pistols as they often show their ugly barrels when you least desire it. I had a revolver in my pocket all the while I was in Surbiton I forgot to leave it behind.”⁵⁶⁶

It’s no wonder that Thomas and Amy have had enough of their sea adventures for now. As Thomas writes, “I think I must after this voyage with all my family take a good rest as I feel very much worn out and I think all of us would be the better for a rest ashore.”⁵⁶⁷ They return to England, pick up their girls and head home to Nova Scotia.

This would be Thomas’ final voyage on *Bethiah Jewett*. Though we don’t know for certain when Thomas returns to Nova Scotia, we know he is not at home for the birth of their seventh child, Benjamin, on October 1, 1864. In fact, a few weeks before Benjamin’s birth, Thomas is at port in England and takes advantage of an opportunity to surprise his parents for a very special occasion.

Golden anniversary

On Wednesday, September 14, 1864, Thomas Sr. and Elizabeth celebrate their fiftieth wedding anniversary. The couple who had spent the greater part of their married life apart had managed to navigate that distance and remain committed to their faith, their family, and to each other.

⁵⁶⁶ *ibid.*

⁵⁶⁷ *ibid.*

Their children acknowledged this with a special celebration, which was described in this page of Elizabeth's diary. She indicates that the family celebration was to have been held on Sunday, September 18; however, son Thomas makes a surprise appearance earlier in the week:

September 13, 1864—Tuesday

"Thomas, to my great surprise and joy, came to Hook this evening. Not expecting to see Thomas again. The celebration of the anniversary of the fiftieth wedding day was put off til the Sunday as on that day we all meet. Therefore, we were quite unprepared, however, we managed to get a goose and with Mr. Pynes' help, we had a fine cod and some nice carrot soup. So, the 14th (Wednesday) was a feast day and Thomas made it the golden wedding by presenting his Parents and all his Sisters with a very chaste gold ring as a token of his affection which will ever live in the memory of his Parents. It was a happy day. We only wanted Benj., Amaret & Barbara to complete the family circle. We were favoured with letters from them all, therefore our thoughts were exchanged.

"I think Thomas came to England on purpose."⁵⁶⁸



The engraved 50th Anniversary ring given to Elizabeth Waters by her son Thomas in 1864. Elizabeth's great-great-granddaughter Rosemary Cowan now has it.



One of only two photos of Elizabeth Waters.



An equally rare image of Thomas Waters Sr.

Chapter 21

The Captain Grows Weary

THOMAS SAILS AGAIN FROM ENGLAND FOR NEW YORK, arriving after a hurricane-ridden thirty-nine-day passage. He docks in New York on November 15, having survived—but just barely:

“We arrived here after a very very stormy passage of 39 days. We encountered a hurricane, had decks swept, lost sails, but no lives etc. There were few of us who expected to outlive it, but here we are like shrimps in London (all alive o).⁵⁶⁹ I never had to hold on harder in my life to the Mizzen shrouds.⁵⁷⁰ I just hung by my arms my legs floated away as far as they could but I got them back again, some of the men had narrow escapes. The roar of the sea & hurricane was so fearful that the dogs on board howled and trembled with terror. May I never see another hurricane. I had to send it out (Papa can explain that). We sailed in a circle with the wind until I gradually edged out of it.”⁵⁷¹

569 Thomas is referencing the cries of fishmongers on market day in London that might go like this: “Shrimps! Shrimps! Fine shrimps! Fish alive! Alive! Alive O!” For more, *London Labour and the London Poor, Volume 1. Billingsgate*. Mayhew, Henry, 1861. Found 5/9/21 at the Tufts Digital Library at <https://dl.tufts.edu/teiviewer/parent/73666f96f/chapter/c5s3>.

570 On a sailing boat, “shrouds” are pieces of standing rigging which hold the mast up from side to side. The mizzen shrouds would be holding up the mizzen mast, likely both fore and aft. Found 5/9/21 at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barque>.

571 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. November 18, 1864.

Official Number:	Name of Ship	Tonnage	Whether Steam or Sailing Ship	Port of Registry	Date of Registry	Occasion of Appropriation	Date of Appropriation
54,051	J. N. C.	167	Sail.	Wgfy.	19 Dec 67	First Reg.	19 Dec 67
2	Scipion	220	"	"	1 Feb 1868	"	1 Feb 1868
3	Steaming Gale	28	"	"	17 Mar "	"	17 Mar "
4	Martha Howe	25	"	"	17 "	"	17 "
5	Edwin Cook	23	"	"	28 "	"	28 "
6	John G. Hall	326	"	"	4 July "	"	4 July "
7	William	54	"	"	8 "	"	8 "
8	John Campbell	728	"	"	1 Oct 68	"	1 Oct "
9	E. J. Oakes	161	"	"	11 Dec 68	"	11 Dec "
54,310	Prince of Wales	33	"	"	15 "	"	15 "
54,311	Domineer Luck	41	"	"	7 Feb 69	"	7 Feb 69
2	Martha	137	"	"	20 April "	"	20 April "
3	Home	83	"	"	26 June "	"	26 June "
4	David Martin Duane	126	"	"	10 July "	"	10 July "
5	Frank E	32	"	"	22 "	"	22 "
6	Marie	89	"	"	22 "	"	22 "
7	Esther	202	"	"	31 "	"	31 "
8	Louis Brothers	38	"	"	4 Aug "	"	4 Aug "
9	Ernest	40	"	"	14 "	"	14 "
54,370	Argo	90	"	"	19 "	"	19 "
1	Odalisk	265	Sail.	R. John & Co. Reg.	1861	1. Reg.	16 May 68
2	Helena	165	"	"	19 "	"	17 "
3	Prince George	1,125	"	"	20 "	"	23 "
4	Cepheia	190	"	"	21 "	"	31 "
5	Regynadae	211	"	"	22 "	"	31 "
6	Lucy Anne	19	"	"	23 "	"	1 June "
7	Palmerston	98	"	"	24 "	"	4 "
8	Joseph	61	"	"	25 "	"	6 "
9	Daisy	35	"	"	26 "	"	11 "
54,380	Karal Anne	34	"	"	27 "	"	12 "
1	Thy Flower	22	"	"	28 "	"	14 "
2	M. Wood	550	"	"	29 "	"	20 "
3	Brothers	51	"	"	55-1869 Cent. promiss.	22	
4	John Ellis	762	"	"	30-1868 / Registry	2 July	
5	Angene	63	"	"	31 "	"	
6	Leona	300	"	"	32 "	"	4 "
7	Gem	196	"	"	33 "	"	7 "
8	Eliza	138	"	"	34 "	"	9 "
9	Sie A.	14	"	"	36 "	"	16 "
54,390	Sea Queen	173	"	"	37 "	"	17 "
1	Death of Nations	1123	"	"	38 "	"	20 "
2	Little Jerry	350	"	"	39 "	"	22 "
3	William	321	"	"	40 "	"	24 "
4	Adrius	1284	"	"	41 "	"	24 "
5	Mari Anne	1197	"	"	43 "	"	24 "
6	Adrius	114	"	"	44 "	"	30 "
7	Speculator	71	"	"	45 "	"	31 "
8	David Weston	552	"	"	46 "	"	31 "
9	Albion	86	"	"	47 "	"	1 July "
54,400	Ultraeana	1193	"	"	48 "	"	

The Record of Appropriation for Thomas Jr.'s new ship, *Wealth of Nations*, official number 54,391. We were unable to find any images of the ship itself, however, this record shows that the ship was registered on July 2, 1866 at 1,188 tonnes burthen.

The entry is the tenth from the bottom of the list. From crewlist.org.uk.

It is possible that Thomas is home for the next couple of years; we can't be certain as there are no letters after the November 1864 letter until the fall of 1866 when he arrives in Liverpool having left the "NE Coast of America" at some point in September. Thomas is now forty-four years old, and not in good health. His next voyage will be on a new ship, *Wealth of Nations*.

In the Liverpool harbour Thomas stays aboard ship due to an illness, where he is often visited by his kind, much-loved Quaker brother Ben and sister-in-law Barbara, who bring him beef, tea and gruel. They see him off from Liverpool on November 7, giving him pots of fuchsia, crocus, moss and geranium for his cabin garden on his new ship. He is very grateful for their kindness:

"Ben & Barbara and their little Tommy were kind enough to come and see me off, tho' it was their busiest day and I have to thank Mr. Bake and his brother and Ben for the cheerful look at the present moment of my cabin, ornamented with a fine blooming fuschia [sic], a thrifty slip of geranium, Jane's ivy, Papa's little gooseberry bush quite green, Ben's beautiful pot of green moss or fern very thriving, Ben's crocuses just above ground but the climate too hot, Jane's sweet peas come up but die, likewise the convolvulus seeds, the mint lived some time but is dead now. My old Madeira vine is prepared I hope to safely accompany me another long voyage—it has been with me for about 8 years. I should have fared rather badly if it had not been for Ben & Barbara; they attended to all my wants, supplied me with thread, needles, buttons, pins etc. and as I happen to have a good tailor, but very bad sailor, on board I can get all my much dilapidated [sic] garments mended, all my nightshirts gave out, they were very old so the tailor yesterday made me a nice one out of some linen sheeting that Barbara bought for me, he hems the new sheets and in fact is very useful in his way, but useless for what I shipp'd him for. I do not think I ever enjoyed better health than since I left port.

"I think that bad spell has worked off all the bad blood and it was fortunate I was so near Barbara & Ben, Barbara used to make beef tea, cocoa, gruel, sago etc. and Ben used to bring them to me hot, either on board ship or else every night and morning while I was in bed and I have still got some cake and other little niceties that they brought me. I hope Eliz's health is improving and that Mr. Pyne is well again. I often look at the photographs of their house etc which they kindly sent me. I have got Jane's blackberry

basket with a bunch of nuts and an acorn in company hanging up close to where I now am writing in fact within two feet of my nose...”⁵⁷²

Benjamin prospers

Even though he is ill, Thomas is gratified to see that his brother has entered a new phase of his life with a strong wife, a prospering business, and the start of a family. Benjamin and Barbara live in spacious accommodations above their store. Benjamin runs the Birkenhead business under its original name, Bake & Co, Tea Dealers, Coffee Roasters.⁵⁷³

By 1866 when Thomas is in Liverpool, three of Ben’s eventual four children—Tom, May, and Amy⁵⁷⁴—have been born. Daughter Edith will be born two years later.⁵⁷⁵

When Thomas sails again in November 1866, he has been made hale and hearty again by the loving ministrations of his family, and he heads south again,



The Benjamin & Barbara Waters family lived above the store at the corner of Monk and Chester Streets in Birkenhead.

572 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. Christmas 1866 (no date).

573 *The Waters Family, Volume IV*. Turvey, Sheila. P. 16.

574 Amy will become an important character in Section 2 as the matriarch of the Hewson family.

575 Edith will grow up to marry John Hilton Turvey II. One of their children will be Sheila Turvey, who compiles and publishes a great deal of family history, including a book on the Turvey family called *Faith and Persistence*. Turvey, referenced many times in this book.

crossing the equator two days before Christmas 1866. Unfortunately, he is ill again and depressed at the loneliness of the sea.

Sometimes crews would have to stay aboard ship for days, weeks or even months, never being allowed to enter the city if they were quarantined. These were brutally frustrating and boring days for the crew, as were the days when there was no wind for the sails and they would become stranded at sea. One lovely description also highlights the son following in the father's footsteps... with a bit of humor, despite the accompanying loneliness:

“...We are nearly right under the sun and Papa can explain how hot that means; however, I am in capital health, take a good bath every day, drink no coffee and walk the poop half the day and half the night. Sometimes we see a distant ship and perhaps if near enough exchange signals, but take it all together, a sea walk on the poop, though ever so long, is rather dreary and monotonous. Still, it is not altogether uninteresting, and I must say I rather enjoy it; I suppose from habit.

“For as the old sailor song runs

‘With his light shining pumps and jacket so blue,

He will walk the quarter deck as his daddy used to.’

“You must not take this to be literally true because in fact it is literally untrue. I walk in slippers and no jacket and on the poop instead of quarter deck, but the sense of the lines is perfectly true.”⁵⁷⁶

By New Year's Day 1867, Thomas is nearly out of the tropics, and by the end of January is 600 miles south of the Cape of Good Hope. On February 3, he reaches the remote St. Paul's Island, halfway between Africa and Australia in the middle of the Indian Ocean. He says this is the “first land that I put my foot on after leaving London in the “Fawn” how many years ago I forget.”⁵⁷⁷

A new experience—the Orient

But this time Thomas' destination is Asia, not Australia. On this eight-month voyage he will travel to Singapore, Cambodia, South Vietnam, Hong Kong, and the Philippines, and will have many more adventures. The excessive heat and humidity disagree with the captain, as does his increasing loneliness:

576 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Waters Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. December 25, 1866.

577 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. Written Christmas, 1866, but not sent until April 3, 1867, and not received by his parents in Hook until May 5.

“Dear Mother, I have just been reading over all your old letters to me, they are all such cheerful ones and when I feel used up I generally take a good dose of them and they brighten me up. We are now at anchor in the river Saigon, nothing to be seen but Mangrove swamps all round and we are so close to the banks that we can hear the monkeys chattering in the thick woods, no dwelling of any description in sight. . . . It is excessively hot here and it was so at Singapore so that I could take but few walks in the country tho’ I had several drives.”⁵⁷⁸

It is an undeveloped jungle area where dangers abound, human and otherwise, but as usual Thomas finds something to marvel at:

“I did walk once or twice but the Malays are so treacherous that I always had to carry a revolver especially at dusk, and in the jungle the tigers were very numerous but now they are seldom seen within 10 miles, however my walk in the jungle was rewarded by my finding a very pretty bush with peculiarly handsome leaves, of which I picked two and when I got on board, being tired I just opened the first book at hand and placed the leaves in and forgot all about them when about a week or two afterwards I happened to open the book and the two leaves were actually growing, they had thrown out little rootlets all around their edges and here and there small perfectly formed leaves were growing so I have planted one—the best—in my garden and the other I will perhaps enclose to you, but I wish I had more of them, they are so curious, they do not belong to the cactus tribe.

“All hands have been sick with fever and dysentery. I was about the last that got it and was rather bad but now I am all right again and hope to keep so.”⁵⁷⁹

When he reaches Saigon, Thomas writes his mother a detailed description of the climate, the people, and the culture, with his familiar keen eye and sense of humor:

“I have a native boat (Sampan) to carry me to and from the ship and shore, the crew (who eat, sleep, cook and live entirely day and night in it) consists of an Anamede or native woman, her husband an Anamede and one child, a dirty set but apparently very happy.

578 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Elizabeth Waters. May 5, 1867.

579 *ibid.*

“My cargo is put on board and stowed by coolies who I do not think trouble themselves about Manchester or the cotton question for they are entirely nude and seem to like it, but it is not pleasant to be too intimate with them as their manners are not gentlemanly.

“On shore yesterday I saw 2 elephants male and female and they seemed to have almost human intelligence, when they came to a bridge the Mahout or driver who is seated on their neck wanted the female which was ahead to go over it, but after first feeling the bridge with her trunk and then with her fore feet she refused and backed astern, then the driver tried the male elephant, but he just put one of his huge feet on the first plank and kind of pressed it down a little and he likewise refused so they had to go to some other bridge.

“The Chinese gentlemen are very hospitable to Englishmen and are very polite after their fashion they always say “Chinchin” when you meet or leave which means, I think, like our “Good day Sir.” They wear silk trousers and a sort of silk shirt with the tails outside their trousers; the ladies are dressed somewhat similarly with generally the addition of what I suppose is the fashionable dress bonnet but such a shape and size it looks like a neatly constructed half bushel basket squashed down at the sides, as if the family preparatory to going out had all jumped upon it.”⁵⁸⁰

He also describes his official dress, which was typical of the time:

“How do you think I am, rigged or dressed? I am barefooted, bareheaded indoors of course, outdoors a pith helmet covered with white silk shaped like a big mushroom, then duck trousers, then shirt every button undone, or I should say no buttons to button, for the washerwomen have a spite against white men so they knock off or smash up all their buttons and it is very provoking when you want to appear nice to have three pins, or perhaps as I have a broken needle for buttons, I have run out of pins.”⁵⁸¹

He purchases mosquito curtains at the market, but “still the venomous rascals get at me and give me no peace.” And other creatures have come to inhabit the ship: “A large species of wasp has built a nest on the back of my swinging

580 *ibid.*

581 *ibid.*

barometer quite complete and a bird has built a nest and laid some eggs in it in my main top.”⁵⁸²

By May 29 when they have loaded and leave South Vietnam, he writes, “I will be glad to get away from this muddy river.”⁵⁸³

Frying pan into the fire

If Thomas thought the spring in South Vietnam was miserable, he was to next experience the Philippines in the summer. After spending a month in Hong Kong, *Wealth of Nations* arrives in Manila on July 29, where it remains for a month. Thomas becomes ill again, and at first refuses doctor’s invitations to go to shore, preferring to stay on ship. But his health deteriorates so much that he must be carried onto shore:

“My health has not been quite so good as usual, the extreme heat joined to the sickly season has begun to tell upon me and the Doctors say I do not take relaxation enough and that I ought to stay more on shore where I would not be quite so lonely.

“I have had very many kind invitations to stay at merchants’ houses on shore but until I was really sick I accepted none, then I was fairly carried into the country where the plantain and orange brushed my bedroom window and everything around was green and beautiful.

“Under this kind treatment I soon recovered, had a nice drive in the cool of the evening every day and was taken to two places that I had never been to before— the Opera and a Bullfight where 5 bulls were killed, but I cannot say I at all liked the fight for it was useless danger to the men and downright brutality to the bulls and horses.”⁵⁸⁴

Thomas views bullfighting as a brutish, inhumane pastime:

“When the bulls do not show spirit enough the spectators cry out to put fire to them which is done by sticking an iron barbed firework (something like a big squib) eighteen inches long fancifully decorated with strips of coloured paper into their flesh which after a while explodes and sets fire to the paper which of course terrifies the poor brute into madness and then over goes a man and horse in the dust much to the gratification of

⁵⁸² *ibid.*

⁵⁸³ *ibid.*

⁵⁸⁴ Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. September 2, 1867.

the spectators. One bull took a fearful leap right over the board fencing of the circus and nearly killed his tormentors.”⁵⁸⁵

He also observes brutality of humans to each other:

“Rowing up the river here a few days ago I saw floating a most miserable sight—it was 2 Chinese prisoners chained together who had probably committed suicide to escape from the Spanish cruelties, tho’ the Chinese themselves are I think the most brutal people in the world.”⁵⁸⁶

From the Philippines it was through a typhoon in the China Sea, then across the Pacific to the port at San Francisco. While in San Francisco, Thomas writes a letter that must be frightening to his parents in more than one way. One is the description of the typhoon in the China Sea—not frightening because of the actual incident, but Thomas’ focus on the inevitability of death at sea:

“We got caught in a typhoon in the China Sea, but it did us little damage, swept our decks and blew some of our sails to pieces and left us only 6 live fowls out of 6 dozen. We buried one man at sea and I do not remember ever feeling the solemnity of the burial service as much before (tho’ he was a confounded rascal) “*We therefore commit his body to the deep,*” a big splash, and all the King’s Horses etc. could not pick him up again, vanished!

“After I had done reading the service I heard an old tar say, “*Oh! there’s many a one of us who will rest in the same deep grave with no one to read prayers, or even to say ‘poor fellow’ as we go down, each will say his own burial service with his mouth full of water.*”

“He meant that many of us might be wrecked on a stormy night or washed overboard or go down in a foundering ship, then of course each would gurgle his own service. A glass of grog set them all to rights, specially the old tar.”⁵⁸⁷

Later in the letter Thomas provides evidence of another worry his parents might have—the obvious wear Thomas’ life at sea is taking on not only his physical health, but his mental well-being as well:

“I think I must take another rest ashore after this cruise that is if I can afford it, my eyes which you know a sailor cannot easily do without are not as I would like them to be and a famous oculist [sic] recommended

585 *ibid.*

586 *ibid.*

587 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. December 10, 1867.

grass and green trees, but not to be mixed up and taken at bed time. I am afraid you will think I am drifting into a kind of whimsy state of mind, always fretting about my health, and perhaps I am.”⁵⁸⁸

Also in this letter, we learn that Thomas has an increasing number of nieces and nephews in England—his sister Elizabeth is expecting the last of her five children, and sister-in-law Barbara is expecting the last of her four children. He writes, “Hope Elizabeth and Barbara may get easily and safe thro’ their expected troubles.”⁵⁸⁹

Thomas has enjoyed his time on the Pacific coast: “California seems to me a beautiful country, they raise splendid fruit and vegetables, good beef & mutton & reasonable prices 6 pence per pound.”⁵⁹⁰

After a month and a half in San Francisco, Thomas leaves on January 16, 1868, to return to Liverpool with a load of grain, arriving on June 3.

In July he tells his parents of a further annoyance, a legal matter he must clear up in Liverpool:

“I have had a very tedious case and it was brought before the court of passages when eleven jurymen decided in my favour but one decided against me. However, I gained the case, that is, instead of paying 49.10.0 I paid only 5£6s, but my costs were heavy. I was kept in the witness box and cross questioned for more than one hour and when I came out an elderly clergyman got up and shook hands with me and several of the barristers did the same thing. The case involved an important principle, so I suppose I exposed the villainy.”⁵⁹¹

Thomas describes no more of the story and leaves Liverpool five days later. He makes two journeys to England and back between the end of July and early December. He writes his brother Ben from Digby, reminiscing about his childhood and remarking on the quality of their parents:

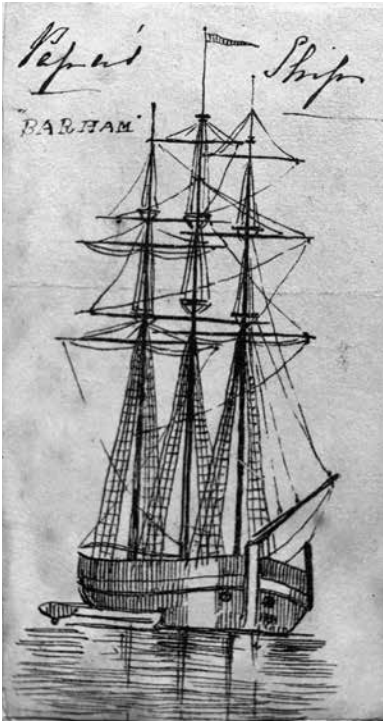
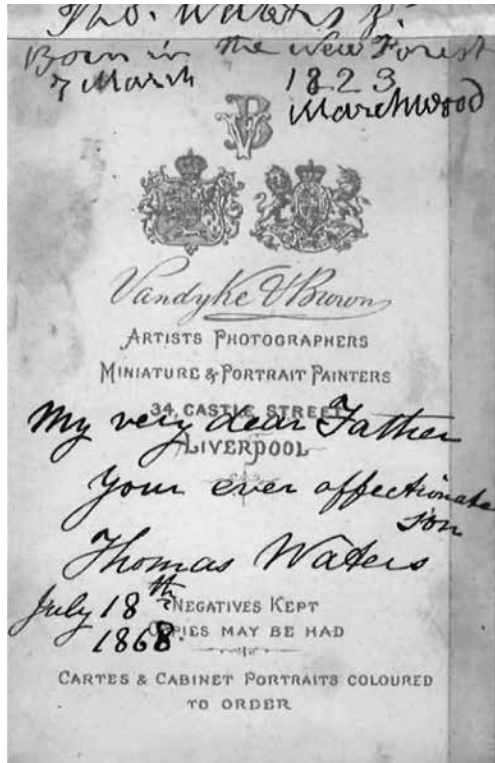
“...repeat with me good brother John’s whimsical rhyme which somehow brings back to me more than any other circumstance the perfect unalloyed happiness of childhood or rather boyhood—it seems to me now that we

588 *ibid.*

589 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. December 10, 1867.

590 *ibid.*

591 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. July 17, 1867.



Thomas Jr.'s mood appears sentimental and reflective during the late 1860s. He gave this 1868 photo of himself to "my very dear father," Thomas Sr., signing it "Your ever affectionate son, Thomas Waters." His sketch of his father's ship *H.M.S. Barham* is annotated "Papa's ship." The second sketch later appears in his wife Amy's scrapbook. Though we can't be certain he drew it, it seems likely. We don't know what the sketch is of; there is only very faint illegible handwriting below the original image, but it could possibly be something drawn from his travels to the Orient during this time.

could not run enough, jump enough, laugh enough, eat enough and probably have bellyaches enough in those good old ever-to-be remembered days.

“Papa and Mamma knew how to handle children well. I hope my children may have as grateful a feeling and as pleasant remembrance of their childhood. Dear gruff do-your-duty and thoroughly kind-hearted Father. Toe-the-mark—a good Father. Dear little sweet worried-to-death Mother made home a Home never to be forgotten. We have been extra fortunate in Parents, and dear Ben I think your children are fortunate in their parents.”⁵⁹²

Thomas also likens his remote village of Digby to living on the sea:

“Living here in this out-of-the-way place is very much like living at sea (barring a good deal) we have to lay in a supply of beef, pork, butter, potatoes, cabbages, onions, and everything else for we have no market, the farmers (very small farmers) bring in now and then turkeys, geese, fowls etc. if you miss their carts you have to go without for some time.”⁵⁹³

It appears that he is home in Nova Scotia until January 7, 1869, when he leaves again for Liverpool on *Wealth of Nations*. He’s back in Boston in late March, then spends most of April in Saint John, New Brunswick and then on June 5 returns to Liverpool. On June 20, his last child, daughter Sarah Lalia,⁵⁹⁴ is born. Thomas leaves Liverpool on July 2 and is in Cardiff, Wales for the month of July. In September he is in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and from October 5 to November 26 he is in the port town of Montevideo, Uruguay, on the east coast of South America. On October 9 he writes to his parents about the town:

“Beef is cheap and bad, mutton cheap and plentiful when the state of the roads will admit of the sheep being driven to Market but since I have been here there has been no mutton, roads impassable, pork very bad and dear, fowls scarce and eggs ditto, potatoes poor at 3 1/2 pence per pound, other vegetables inferior and dear, oranges 2 pence each, other fruit in proportion.

“The market folks say it is all owing to the swollen rivers and bad country roads. My business in all countries brings me in contact with the lowest waterside classes, the genuine cut throats who prowl around the shores knowing the tide is a convenient and safe deposit for their victims,

592 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Benjamin Waters. December 7, 1867.

593 *ibid.*

594 Also spelled “Laleah” in some references.

consequently I am familiar with their peculiar characteristics and I can safely say that Monte Video can claim villainous distinction.

“Perhaps the dull wet murky weather and the filthy broken down landing places may give the rascals an extra shade of depravity. I am seldom on shore in any country after dark especially in those countries inhabited by degenerated Spanish.”⁵⁹⁵

The end of the Age of Sail

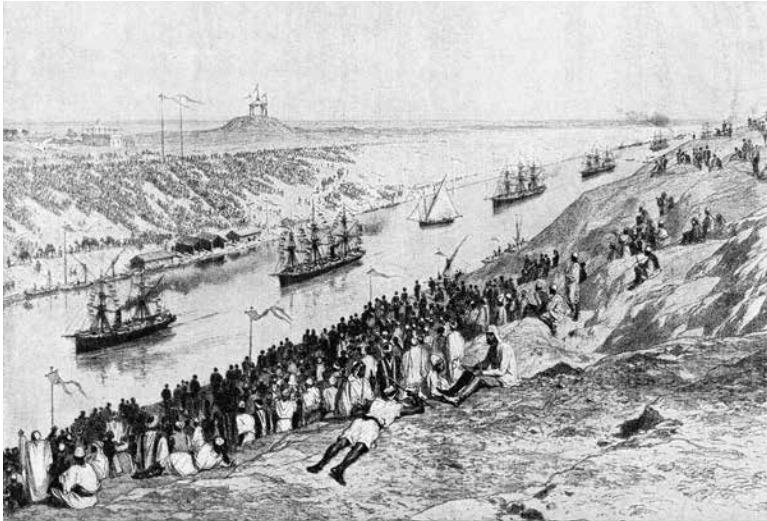
On November 17, 1869, a momentous world event occurs that will begin the quick downward spiral of the Great Age of Sail: the opening to navigation of the Suez Canal. A man-made waterway connecting the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean via the Red Sea that took more than a decade to build, the canal now enables a much more direct route for shipping between Europe and Asia. For the first time, ships can pass from the North Atlantic to the Indian Ocean without having to circumnavigate the African continent around the Cape of Good Hope.⁵⁹⁶



This image shows the difference in distance from London to Mumbai by the new canal route versus the traditional route around the African continent. The new route cut off 5,100 miles from the journey from London to India.

595 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. October 9, 1869.

596 *The Cape of Good Hope*. NASA Earth Observatory website. Found 5/10/21 at <https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/145476/the-cape-of-good-hope>.



An engraving depicting the ceremonies on the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

The trip around the southern tip of Africa isn't only much longer but is also extremely dangerous. Originally named the Cape of Storms in the 1480s by the Portuguese explorer Bartolomeu Dias, it was later renamed to Good Hope to attract more people to the Cape Sea Route. The Cape eventually became a significant port and waypoint for sailors traveling from Europe to Asia. The currents near the Cape, where the Atlantic and Indian Oceans meet, can be treacherous for ships, as Thomas Waters Jr. discovers during his career. Dangerous waves from these currents have caused many shipwrecks. According to folklore, these shipwrecks led to the legend of the *Flying Dutchman*, a ghost ship doomed to sail the oceans forever after being lost in a severe storm near the Cape.⁵⁹⁷

With the opening of the canal, which was made for steamships and not sailing ships, the Great Age of Sail begins to wind down, as wooden ships can no longer compete with steam-powered vessels who can deliver goods between East and West in half the time. Thus, the end of Thomas Waters Jr.'s career as the captain of *Wealth of Nations* is perhaps symbolic of the greater demise of the merchant sailing ship.

597 *ibid.*

Chapter 22

The Guañape Islands

FOR THE FIRST HALF OF 1870, Thomas travels to Callao, the port near Lima, Peru and on to the Guañape Islands due west of Callao. Thousands of sea birds circle the great white rock of the island, its color made by centuries of bird droppings and other materials on the rocky isle. The droppings, called guano, provide a high-quality fertilizer that has been fought over by England, France, Germany, and the United States for more than thirty years. The crusted surface of Guañape and other islands off the coast of Peru are called White Gold for their extreme value. The first shipment out of Peru to Liverpool made its owners £100,000 pounds; in 2022 this would be worth nearly \$13 million.⁵⁹⁸

The crew likely suffers hardships described by others of the time—such as the overwhelming stench of ammonia from the droppings that kept their noses constantly burning while waiting for the ship to be loaded. One benefit was the best seal hunting they had ever witnessed: a massive colony of thousands of seals call the waters off the island home. The crew had plenty of free time for hunting—loading a ship full of guano was a complex, mostly manual process that could take up to three months.⁵⁹⁹

Barges were filled at shore by Chinese workers called “coolies” who collected the guano with pickaxes and buckets and then dumped the guano into massive

598 According to the CPI Inflation Calculator. Found 4/30/22 at <https://www.in2013dollars.com/>.

599 *A History of the Peruvian Guano Industry*. Lawrence, Jeff. May 22, 2014. Found 4/12/21 at <https://yaffle53.wordpress.com/2014/05/22/a-history-of-the-peruvian-guano-industry/>.

bamboo chutes leading down to the barges, which then took the guano out to waiting merchant ships. Sometimes ships had to wait up to eight months for their turn to be loaded.⁶⁰⁰



Indentured “coolies” mining guano. Smithsonian National Museum of American History. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.



A guano chute or “manguera” on the Chincha Islands. Artist unknown.

600 *ibid.*

A birthday letter

On his forty-seventh birthday, March 7, 1870, Thomas begins a letter by quoting song lyrics, and it is clear he is excited to be soon on his way home:

“Homeward bound but I must not hurrah until we round the wintry
Cape Horn. Winter time too.

“Blow the windy morning

“Blow the winds heigh ho,

“Clear away the morning dews,

“Blow, blow, blow.

“That’s the song we will sing. Everybody is happy, we are all homeward bound. Look out for me about July and tell Ben and the girls not to calculate to get any of my Father’s good strawberries this year for greedy Tom has his imaginative eye on them...”⁶⁰¹

On his way back from this voyage, Thomas writes a letter to his parents that he will mail from Cork, Ireland when he returns on July 18. He starts the letter at some point in early July, where the weather is “becalmed again,” which is “beautiful but very unprofitable weather, very trying to a captain’s patience and temper.”⁶⁰²

He describes yet another dangerous (and foul) journey after rounding the southern tip of South America, Cape Horn,⁶⁰³ sometime in previous February:

“...we are making a long passage, had much calm weather off Peru and now again in the vicinity of the Line. We had real beautiful weather off Cape Horn, but we encountered a tremendous sea cross sea and got boarded by one which if the ship had not been very strong would have made a dangerous affair for us and as it was it did us a great deal of damage—smashed all our cabin doors, ladders, foreward house, Hatch house, in fact did all the usual damage that hundreds of tons of water hurled on board in one wave can do, besides pouring an alarming amount of water through our open deck seams and top sides, flooding one of our fresh water tanks with liquid guano and spoiling 2000 gallons of water leaving us only a weeks allowance of clean water.

601 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. March 7, 1870.

602 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. July 3, 1870.

603 Cape Horn was almost as notorious to sailors as was the Cape of Good Hope.

“However we got things to rights again all but the fresh water and I am longing for a drink of good pure water, tho’ I do not think the nasty guano water at all unwholesome as my crew are all in the best of health and I have not lost a man this voyage by either death or desertion which is a very unusual thing; we had to throw overboard some of our cargo for the safety of all concerned; pump and bale.”⁶⁰⁴

It’s here where again, and with more emphasis, Thomas comments on his state of mind, which seems precarious. The years at sea are taking their toll:

“I sometimes fancy that I am getting nervous—I think the constant anxiety which ship masters endure on long voyages and unsuitable diet with other causes and so little relaxation is trying to the best constitutions.”⁶⁰⁵

Last trip home

On August 1, Thomas returns to Liverpool, where he appears to remain until October. He spends time with his family, visiting his parents at Hook, Surrey, where he delights to find marigolds, sweet peas, and mignonette in their garden. When he returns to Liverpool brother Ben and Barbara see him off with their usual kindnesses.⁶⁰⁶

On October 5, Thomas will leave Liverpool for the last time, though neither he nor his family know this. Moored in the port at Downs, he boasts of his crew:

“We are now off off and away and I think I have got the best crew that I ever had. My Pilot says he never saw such a fine set and well behaved—nearly all are foreigners—Swedes, Danes, Russians, Fins, Norwegians. I had the pick as my last crew some of whom are still with me gave the ship an extra good name.”⁶⁰⁷

The next letter comes almost five months later, from the port of Callao near Lima, Peru. We discover that October gales have done the ship “much injury,” and made for the “longest passage” Thomas has ever experienced.

In the middle of this letter, pertinent to nothing, he suddenly muses on his writing skills:

604 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. July 18, 1870.

605 *ibid.*

606 *ibid.*

607 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. October 7, 1870.

“Used I always to spell badly and use bad grammar? Or is it my memory failing, somehow the double l’s and the e’s and i’s and a few, or I had better own a good many other letters single and double get into wrong positions. Perhaps it is the ignorance of the letters themselves, it serves them right.”⁶⁰⁸

This comment seems even more odd, considering that the text just previous contained nothing but perfect spelling and grammar. Next, he makes the last comment we will hear from him about his captain’s quarters garden, which seems to still be a bright spot in his world, as it is flourishing:

“I hope you both are enjoying your garden as much as I am enjoying my little one. The mignonette is splendid and Janey’s marigolds seem to have a charmed life for if I did not continually root them out my garden would be all marigolds, none of the sweet peas germinated.”⁶⁰⁹

Beyond that, however, the conditions at Callao are grim. The food conditions on ship have deteriorated through the long journey, though the saving grace were the pigs, who were slaughtered for good eating. They also catch some albatrosses, but, Thomas says, “they make a rather fishy mess.” Herbs from his miniature garden have complemented the pork wonderfully:

“...we had it three times a day, and the mates used to take snacks of it during their night watches...I must not forget the sage, thyme etc. that I gathered at Hook. They agreed beautifully with roast pork and infant pigs, and I have enough still left to accommodate many more suckers and roast loins. Fresh beef would be a nice change, but I must not grumble for we have plenty of potatoes...We have got curried sucker for dinner today, Englishman like I think a good deal of belly.”⁶¹⁰

Thomas had brought some sauerkraut with him from London and declared it “delicious.” However, other victuals didn’t fare as well, and Thomas is hoping to be able to purchase some foodstuffs, where he can find them at an affordable price:

“Our potatoes are spoiling with a kind of dry rot, black spots through them. We will lose about two or three tons and I cannot replace them in Callao, they are too expensive, about three pence per pound, and sweet

608 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. February 18, 1871.

609 *ibid.*

610 *ibid.*

potatoes won't keep and they cost one penny per pound. Yams are scarce and dear but fine cabbages are reasonable about 8 shillings per dozen. Grapes will be just in season."⁶¹¹

His predictions turn out to be correct; when they arrive in Callao on March 12, he finds "It is extremely hot here and everything excessively dear, no potatoes of any sort to be got... Beef 10 pence per pound mutton 2 shillings and sixpence per pound..."⁶¹²

Thomas reports that on his arrival he has received a letter from his parents dated the previous November 13, one from Ben dated January 10 and four letters from Amy.

This letter is received at Hook by West India Mail on April 11, and to our knowledge, it is the last letter his parents receive from him. In the same letter he indicates that he is "just going to write" Amy, so though we have no evidence either way, he may have written a last letter to her.

It is notable that in this last letter, Thomas expresses gratitude for his family, reflecting:

"I wonder if anyone had or could have kinder or better Father and Mother, Sisters and Brother than I have. I have just been reading over all my English letters which is my usual way of cheering myself up when worried by bad winds or circumstances."⁶¹³

611 *ibid.*

612 *ibid.*

613 *ibid.*

Chapter 23

His Final Voyage

*There's tempest in yon horned moon,
And lightning in yon cloud;
And hark the music, mariners,
The wind is piping loud;
The wind is piping loud, my boys,
The lightning flashing free
While the hollow oak our palace is,
Our heritage the sea.*

—ALLAN CUNNINGHAM, THE SEA SONG⁶¹⁴

IT WAS JUNE 3, 1871, and the weather had been unsettled, hazy. Captain Thomas Waters' crew worked to ready *Wealth of Nations* for the next leg of its voyage from the islands of Guañape back to the port in Callao 240 miles to the south along the coast of Peru.

Thomas' mission had been to load *Wealth of Nations* to the gills with the prized fertilizer, guano, and sail it back to England. Following that, he was bound for home in Digby, Nova Scotia. Beating the normal ninety-day timeframe to load a ship with guano, *Wealth of Nations* was ready to go in just thirty-six days.⁶¹⁵

614 A poem found copied out in the Waters Family Scrapbook. Written in 1804. It was titled "The Mariner's Song" in the handwritten copy, but many of Cunningham's sea songs were similarly named, and this may have been an unintentional error.

615 *A History of the Peruvian Guano Industry*. Lawrence, Jeff. May 22, 2014. Found 4/2/20 at <https://yaffle53.wordpress.com/2014/05/22/a-history-of-the-peruvian-guano-industry/>.



The location of the Guañape Islands in relation to the Peruvian coastline. The distance between the Guanape Islands and the Port of Callao is 240 nautical miles.

Given that he was headed home for a much-needed respite with his family in Nova Scotia after such a long absence, Captain Waters should have been eager and anxious, but he just didn't seem to be himself, according to his First Mate R.B. Walters,⁶¹⁶ who would later retell his story to a marine commission, in a letter later to Amy, and later verbally in a personal visit to the family in Digby.

Thomas' previous trips to the Guañape islands had left him with no interest in returning. "The Guañape Islands are a most miserable group of barren rocks," he had written the previous year to his parents on his forty-seventh birthday. "I do not wish to see them again. Everything very dear and very poor and a murderous hole."⁶¹⁷

616 Walters will be referred to from now on as the 'First Mate' to reduce confusion between "Waters" and "Walters".

617 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. March 7, 1871.

A succession of heavy gales from westward had driven them into the Bay of Biscay in February 1871. They had lost some of *Wealth of Nations*' most important spars, the mainyard being one, and almost all the sails were blown to ribbons. They had to keep a great press of canvas to save the ship from a dangerous lee shore. During a storm, the ship caught fire, the flames bursting through the forward house. It was a tough and scorching hour's work to control it. They had to throw overboard about 1,000 deals⁶¹⁸ and boards from the deck. It was thirty days before they were clear of the Bay.⁶¹⁹

Following that, a man was killed in the rounding of the treacherous Cape Horn, where Thomas was also injured: "I got my wrist sprained very badly by suddenly grasping a loose rope to save myself in a heavy lurch from going to Leeward."⁶²⁰

Then there had been the terrible incident on their 1870 stop at Guañape. It was what had capped off Thomas' desire to get away from the massive cliffs as quickly as possible.

In the birthday letter he had written in 1870, Thomas had detailed this horrific event with his careful, measured penmanship:

"I saw the sequel to a most desperate struggle for life. A bold British tar, very powerful and as usual drunk and quarrelsome, thought to amuse himself and gratify his noble propensities by pitching a small and inoffensive clerk (who was stationed on a narrow projecting ledge to keep account of the guano-laden boats) into the sea. The cliffs are precipitous and 300 or 400 feet high with sheer drops of 200 feet to the next lower ledge overhanging the very deep water at the base.

"The poor clerk, a small but wiry man, seemed to know at once when he was K. Jack on the narrow ledge where two could not pass and where no help could come that his death warrant was near, he however struggled furiously in despair clutching to the rocks until his fingernails tore out, but in a few seconds both had passed to their account, Jack and his victim in their deadly embrace fell about 100 feet. They struck on a projecting cliff which separated them.

618 "Deals" were boards cut from pine or fir of a specified size, most commonly 3" x 9" x 12'. From *Shipbuilding Terms, Wooden Ships of River John*. Found 5/13/2022 at <http://www.parl.ns.ca/woodenships/terms.htm#dtoh>.

619 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. February 18, 1871.

620 *ibid*.

“Jack bounded off into the sea and never rose until a week afterwards when my boat picked him up horribly disfigured. The poor Austrian clerk was caught on a ledge with his skull crushed, broken bones, etc. I saw him five minutes after, a painful sight; his coffin was already making, a rough affair. He was buried with his blood-stained dirty clothes and boots on just as he was picked up in less than one hour after the struggle and I presume that this scribble is about all that records or notices the event.”⁶²¹

The first mate would later tell Amy that he sensed that all these ominous events were accumulating in the captain’s mind. He would also tell Amy that sometimes Thomas mumbled to himself and wouldn’t answer any salutations; other times he would be uncharacteristically churlish with him, or rude to one of the seamen. Daughter Lizzie would later confirm that Thomas had also exhibited signs of confusion and had said as much to her in a letter.

Wealth of Nations sets sail at 8:00 p.m. on June 3, 1871, with twenty-two souls on board.

The hazy weather eventually cleared after they sailed from Guañape Island, and the crew enjoyed a much-needed unremarkable journey for ten days, traveling at an average speed of five knots. Then, on Tuesday, June 13, only thirty-one miles from their destination, the Port of Callao, disaster struck in the form of a small cluster of rocks known as the Hormigas de Afiguera.

621 Letter. Thomas Waters Jr. to Thomas Sr. & Elizabeth Waters. March 7, 1870.

Chapter 24

The Captain & His Ship

IT HAPPENED OUT OF THE BLUE, OR RATHER THE BLACK. The sun had set around 5:30 p.m. The *Wealth of Nations* was traveling at seven knots at 7:45 p.m. toward the Port of Callao. If all went well, they would arrive there before sunrise the next morning. A waning crescent moon wouldn't rise until midnight, so the world at sea was mostly black.⁶²² Second Mate Thomas Hanket was on watch and Captain Thomas Waters Jr. was walking the poop.

Suddenly, there was a great jolt as the ship hit the largest of a group of rocks which had been invisible to those on watch. The first mate later reported:

“...all hands sprang to the deck, the Captain gave orders to haul up the courses, let run the topgallant and topsail halliards⁶²³ we did so he then ordered me to get the boats out for the ship was going to pieces I got out the gig and sent the Second Mate and three men in it, then I tried to get out the long boat but the sea was breaking over the ship and she was down on her beam ends, and her mizen [sic] mast and foremast were gone, we could not get the boats over until they stove or were filled...”⁶²⁴

622 *Moon Phase for Tuesday, June 13, 1871*. Nine Planets. Found 5/26/22 at <https://nineplanets.org/moon/phase/6-13-1871/>.

623 More commonly spelled “halyards,” the Cambridge Dictionary defines them as ‘a rope or cable that is used to pull something such as a sail or flag up or down on a ship.’

624 Letter. First Mate R.B. Walters to Amy Waters. June 22, 1871.

Finally, he spots Thomas, bound in the mizzen chains:

“...we held on to the wreck and the Captain was in the mizen [sic] chains when I saw him last, and we spoke together we said there was no chance for our lives, the Captain told me to come if I could and we would pray before we separated never to meet in this world again, but we hoped to meet in heaven, when I got onto the piece of deck that floated away with me I tried to persuade the Captain to come to me but he made no reply why he would not do so, it was very dark and I could only discern that there was one or two in the mizen chains when I spoke to them last but did not know whether the Captain was one or not...”⁶²⁵

Wealth of Nations had been utterly destroyed in less than three hours. The first mate and his fellow survivors spend the night adrift on the slim piece of plank among the fragments of the wreck. They are injured and freezing, but they are alive.

The next morning, the first mate, the quartermaster and five seamen are pulled up onto the Peruvian *Barque M.A.B.*, bound for Eton when crew members spotted the wreckage of *Wealth of Nations*. Later, three more men are picked up, but nine others are still missing—including Captain Waters.

Isla Hormigas de Afuera

In the light of day, the rocks, also known as the Hornings or Hormuguens Rocks,⁶²⁶ are identified as the source of the ship’s demise. The largest of the rocks was three-quarters of a mile across. They were only twenty-five feet above the water. In a choppy sea, a passerby might miss the rocks entirely from only a short distance away, and certainly would be difficult to discern in the darkest night.

Aboard *M.A.B.*, the first mate finds that some of the crew have been seriously wounded, having been “knocked about” within reach of pieces of the wreck. His hand is seriously wounded, and he feels ill. But, as he would tell people later, Captain Davila Revira of *M.A.B.* and his wife who was on board were “most humane, gentle and kind to us. They deserve our gratitude for their great care to the poor sufferers. So does the Chief Mate Mr. José de la Cerda whose attention was most kind.”⁶²⁷

625 *ibid.*

626 The Islas Hormigas de Afuera are a group of two small islands located approximately 62 kilometers from Callao. There are no human settlements. For more: https://hablemosdeislas.com/c-america/islas-de-peru/#Islas_Hormigas.

627 *Untitled Article. The Times*. August 2, 1871.



Today called "Ant Islands," the Islas Hormigas de Afuera are two small islands located approximately 62 kilometers from Callao. There are no human settlements.

The first mate has no idea what had happened to the second mate and the seamen he had helped escape on the gig, but he later learns that they escaped by cutting the rope that tethered them to the ship and kept them within reach of their fellow sailors. Under the circumstances, this was a cowardly and fatal act. If they had stayed longer, others might have been able to get to the boat, which could've held eight to ten men.

The first mate is enraged to learn this, but then learns the second mate's punishment has been meted out by the highest authority: the boat capsizes near the shore attempting to land in the surf and Thomas Hanket is drowned. The surviving three sailors are discovered on the shore near Chancay and picked up by the Pacific Steam Navigation Company's steamer *Peruano*.

As the first of the surviving crew to reach Peruvian authorities with the story of the shipwreck, it is difficult for the three sailors to convey the details since none of them speak Spanish. *Peruano* immediately wires the captain of the port at Callao on June 16. The text of the telegram mistakenly (perhaps due to the language barrier) identifies the date of the wreck as Sunday, June 11.

The captain telegraphs to Chancay to send the men up immediately. *Peruano* arrives at Callao on June 19, six days after the shipwreck, and the intelligence is confirmed, leaving little doubt that Captain Waters and nine men have perished. Captain Revira of *Peruano* tells the first mate that he passed the stern of *Wealth of Nations* before picking up the survivors. It had washed off the rocks and was afloat. He went very close to it and examined it, he said, but no one was on it.⁶²⁸

The first mate had given the most wrenching details of the tragedy of *Wealth of Nations* for the record, both in official reports, and in his letter and visit to the

captain's family. In his more public account, the first mate had said that "cold and little energy to try for a swim" kept the captain and others in the mizzen chains from trying to join them. But privately, he confessed to the family that he still didn't know why the captain did not try to save himself.

Perhaps in those final moments the depression that had lately been plaguing Thomas overwhelmed him and he simply lost the will to try and survive. Perhaps, as did many captains, he believed that it was his responsibility to go down with his ship.

We'll never know, and the sinking of *Wealth of Nations* with its Captain, Thomas Waters, will always remain a sad and tragic event in the family's collective memory.

One of the several official news reports was this one from the Glasgow Herald:

"Our Liverpool correspondent telegraphs: A few days ago, we had the bare announcement of the loss of the fine ship *Wealth of Nations*, of Liverpool. Yesterday we learned that she was bound from Guañape to England, with a full cargo of guano, and was wrecked on the 13th June about 100 miles from Guañape. We regret to add that the first mate and four seamen were all of the crew saved. The *Wealth of Nations* was a ship of 1187 tons, built in St. John in 1866, and registered as the property of Hall & Fairweather, of that port."⁶²⁹



MONDAY, JULY 31 1871

**TOTAL WRECK OF THE SHIP
WEALTH OF NATIONS.**

LOSS OF THE CAPTAIN AND NINE MEN.

Intelligence was received in Liverpool on Saturday giving details of the total loss of the British ship *Wealth of Nations*, together with the captain and nine seamen. It appears that the ill-fated vessel left Callao for the Guanape Islands on the 14th of April, and nothing was heard of her until the 11th of June, when three seamen, as far as they could be understood, not speaking Spanish, were picked up on the shore near Chancaey. They stated that they had belonged to the English ship *Wealth of Nations*, which vessel was wrecked on the evening of Sunday, the 11th of June, near Callao, to which port she was bound on the return voyage from the Guanape Islands. The three men, with the second mate, escaped from the wreck in a boat, which, when near the shore, capsized, and the second officer, Mr. Thomas Hanket, was drowned.

The following is the chief officer's (Mr. Walter) account of the disaster:—"We left Guanape on the 3rd of June, at 8 o'clock p.m., with fine weather, and nothing happened until the 13th (?), at 7 45 p.m., when the ship struck heavily on rocks, supposed to be the Honnigas. It was the second mate's watch, and by order of Captain Waters, things were got ready for locking ship at 8 p.m. At the time she struck the captain was on the poop. Orders were given to get the boats out, and we succeeded in getting the gig clear, in which the second mate and three men got, taking provisions, ship's papers, and compasses. They got away safely, and it being dark at the time were soon lost sight of. The attempt to launch the other boats was a complete failure, the sea breaking over the ship in a terrible manner, and such was the force of the waves that the vessel soon commenced to break up. At 10 p.m., myself and four men

left the wreck, leaving Captain Waters and the remainder of the crew in the mizen-chains. I beseeched them to come where I was, but the cold, and an evident want of energy to try and swim prevented them from doing so. The plank, which was a piece of the deck planking, on which I was with four men, soon drifted away too far to be of any assistance to the unfortunate sufferers on the wreck, who no doubt shared the fate of the *Wealth of Nations*. The day after the disaster the Peruvian barque *M.A.B.*, bound for Eten, picked me and my four companions up, after we had been knocked about for many hours amongst the wreckage of the ship, and some of the men were seriously wounded in consequence; but Captain Davila Revira, of the *M.A.B.* and his wife, who were on board, were most humane, gentle, and kind to us. Three more of the crew were picked up

on the 14th. The unfortunate Captain Waters, of the *Wealth of Nations*, leaves a wife and a family of eight children."

The chief officer, when he made the above statement, was ignorant of the fate of the second mate, and the three men who escaped in a boat immediately after the ship struck. The following are the names of those who were left on the wreck, and who, no doubt, perished with the ship:—Captain Thomas Waters, John Wilson, steward; Henry Harmon, cook; J. H. Kundsén, Gustavo Johnson, H. Bandelier, O. Hamestrous, Christian Christiansen, and P. Anderson. The names of those who were saved are as follows:—Mr. R. B. Walters, chief officer; N. Leander, boatswain; Christian Also, carpenter; William Wheler, Christian Micholsen, Olaf Olsen, John Olaf, J. Natap, H. Kundsén, H. J. Ekenal, and H. Bellamy, seamen.

The *Wealth of Nations* was a vessel of 1,188 tons register; was built in St. John, N.B., and owned by Mr. William W. Turabull, of that port.

Various articles reported the loss of *Wealth of Nations*, Captain Thomas Waters Jr. and his crew, including this one from the *Liverpool Telegraph*, dated July 31, 1871.

The Pacific Steam Navigation Company.

VAPOR PARA EL CALLAO

El Vapor "CORCOVADO" (8000 toneladas)
 Capitan F. Hewson, saldrá de Valparaiso para
 CALLAO é intermedios el Viérnes 4 de Agosto
 á las 6 p. m. con escala en Los Vilos, Coquimbo,
 Carrizal, Taltal, Antofagasta, Mejillones, Tocopilla,
 Iquique, Pisagua, Arica, Mollendo y Callao.

Tiene excelentes comodidades para pasajeros.

A su regreso del Norte, recibirá pasajeros de Segunda clase a los precios siguientes:—

	De puertos entre Callao y Chitreral inclusive.	De puertos entre Callera y Coquimbo inclusive.	De puertos entre Valparaiso y Coronel inclusive.
A LIVERPOOL	£ 35	£ 30	£ 25

Valparaiso, Agosto 1^o de 1911.

J. W. PEARSON,
Gerente

An ad for passengers to sail to Callao, Peru on Friday, August 4, 1911, on the Corcovado, captained by Frank Hewson.

Four decades later, Thomas' future nephew-in-law, also a ship's captain, would write this about navigation among the Hormigas:

"June 13th 1871. Wreck of "Wealth of Nations" 31 miles due west from Callao the Hormigas de Afuera a small cluster of rocks the longest is about three quarters of a mile in circumference only 25 feet above the water.

The Sailing directions warn all Captains not to approach these rocks closer than a mile for fear of being overtaken by one of those dense fogs which are so frequent on the Peruvian coast.

Captain F. Hewson

S.S. Corcovado

Mollendo⁶³⁰

August 26th 1911"⁶³¹

We don't know if these "sailing directions" existed during Thomas' time, or if perhaps the directions were written because of the wreck of *Wealth of Nations* and perhaps other vessels; however, it is interesting that this is commented on specifically by Captain Frank Hewson, who we will soon meet and who will himself become a central figure in the Waters Family story.

630 Also in Peru. Captain Hewson was obviously familiar with the area.

631 Waters Family Scrapbook. Multiple authors. P. 9.

Chapter 25

The Aftermath

Ocean Grave

*Not in the churchyard shall he sleep, amid the silent gloom,
His home was on the mighty deep, and there shall be his tomb.
And there shall be his tomb.*

*He loved his own bright, deep blue sea, O'er it he loved to roam;
And now his winding-sheet shall be that same bright ocean's foam,
That same bright ocean's foam.*

*No village bell shall toll for him it's mournful, solemn dirge;
The winds shall chant a requiem to him beneath the surge,
To him beneath the surge.*

*For him, break not the grassy turf, nor turn the dewy sod;
His dust shall rest beneath the surf, his spirit with its God,
His spirit with its God.*

—AUTHOR, “C.M.”, PLYMOUTH COLLEGE

SOMETIME AFTER THE AWFUL WRECK, Amy receives two letters, both dated Thursday, June 22, 1871, nine days after the wreck of *Wealth of Nations*. The first is written in ragged script from the injured hand of the captain's faithful friend and First Mate, R.B. Walters; he promises to come and visit her in person since he lives in nearby Saint John, New Brunswick. The second is a more official one from O'Connor & Co.

Both letters contain the tragic news of her husband's likely demise off the Peruvian coast. The letter from O'Connor & Co. in Callao is brief:

"Dear Madam

"With regret we have to inform you of the loss of the *Wealth of Nations* on the 13th instant and we also regret to say that your good husband and nine men are still missing, notwithstanding our having dispatched a steamer in search of them; up to date we have received no tidings of them and we have a grave fear for their safety but the Almighty that so miraculously saved Mr Walters the Chief Mate and ten of the men may also have saved your husband. On Sunday next we intend making another trip to see the Horniga Rocks where the ship was lost to ascertain if any clue can be found as to their whereabouts. We hold a balance of \$1460 belonging to your husband we are at a loss to know how to act, whether to send it to the owners or to you, and await your instructions how to act.

"We deeply sympathise with you for your great loss and remain

Dear Madam

Your obedient

Servants

O'Connor & Co"⁶³²

The first mate's is more personal, opening with:

"Dear Madam, It is with great reluctance I take my pen in hand and am obliged to have to inform you of the total wreck of the Ship "*Wealth of Nations*" and the loss of Captain Waters and nine men."⁶³³

However, nearly two months later, still unwilling to believe all hope is lost, Amy writes to her sister-in-law Jane in England, Thomas' sister:

"My Dear Jane

"I have just this moment received your note and can well judge of your anxiety, we are in a most dreadful state of suspense. I have had sympathising [sic] letters from Callao dated 22nd July the "*Wealth of Nations*" being wrecked on the 13th June the mate and nine men were saved, when they wrote to me, the Captain and nine men were missing. I will just enclose a

632 Letter. O'Connor & Co. to Amy (Dakin) Waters. June 22, 1871.

633 Letter. First Mate R.B. Walters to Amy (Dakin) Waters. June 22, 1871.

copy of the Mate's letter and you will be in possession of all the intelligence we have up to this date.

"Mr Turnbull was over last week and gave us great hope, he thinks the reason why Tom did not make any reply why he did not come to the Mate when he called him is that he probably had some other chance of saving his life and two or three days after the wreck was passed but no one on it this strengthens his hope that they may have been taken off and perhaps taken back to Guañape, the rocks on which the ship struck are only 30 miles from land. I am expecting daily to hear news that will end this frightful suspense, the ships papers are expected now every mail as soon as I hear anything I will at once let you know.

"Oh Jane if our worst fears are realized I cannot say anything more, we can only wait and hope, in the meantime we are in God's hands, His will be done.

"With dear love

I remain

Your ever affectionate Sister

Amaret Waters"⁶³⁴

Acceptance turns into mourning

Almost two weeks later, daughter Lizzie also writes to her Aunt Jane, describing the devastating visit of First Mate Walters to their home that day, as well as the state the family is now in:

"Dear Aunt Jane

"The Mate was here to day and the news is true no hope at all, I can scarcely write but I know you want to hear. Mr. Walters was here nearly all day talked all day about Papa told no more particulars but what you know brought home a lot of old papers, a book of sea weeds, a few letters, a purse of money 12 dollars English, the rest foreign, they were all put in a box, they were in the gig, the Second Mate might have saved 14 or 15 but he cut the rope & rowed off, the Mate said the people in Callao would have stoned him to death and the British Consul at the very least would have sentenced him to nine months hard labour breaking stones.

634 Letter. Amy (Dakin) Waters to Jane Waters. August 11, 1871.

“I cannot write my hand has no power no strength my head aches and I can’t see there is no hope no hope at all he said the Capt. was coming home going to leave the ship in Callao & come home in this last steamboat. He said Papa was very quick he never saw such a quick witted man and he was so pleasant, merry, and lively but he said he was losing his mind that he told him (the Mate) that that was the reason he was coming home that he felt his mind was giving way and he was afraid he couldn’t manage a ship till he came home and gave his mind some rest, the Mate said he was getting very childish at times; Papa was afraid of that he wrote to me in his last letter that he thought his mind was giving way and he wondered if we would be kind to him if he was to lose his mind, the Doctor told him if he did not keep free from anxiety he would not answer for his mind. The Mate says the weather had been hazy for 2 or 3 days and they’d taken no reckoning so of course it was no wonder they missed it.

“Grandpa is very dangerously ill a sort of cholera, trouble never comes alone, he has been very anxious about Papa, everyone grieves about Papa Capt. Hughes actually cried, and another man I heard cried a great deal said Papa had been so kind to him he was such a good man, no pride always spoke to him whether he was dressed or not and no matter what gentleman Papa was with he’d always speak so pleasant have some joke and this man said he never saw anyone with so little pride, everybody likes him, a good many of our friends were anxious to see Papa, they heard so much about him, he was so jolly & pleasant all the darkies⁶³⁵ like him they say the Capt. was such a nice man to work for.

“We don’t know yet what we have got to live on but it is very little, if we can keep this house it will be very nice, and if we can get boarders we won’t be able to until we get a lot more bedroom furniture. I remain

“With very much love to all

Your Affectionate Niece

Lizzie B. Waters”⁶³⁶

635 This derogatory nickname for black people was in common use in America and England up to the 1930s. The Oxford Dictionary defines it as “patronizing or mildly offensive, and the Oxford Dictionary of Slang says: “Originally a neutral colloquial use but now derogatory or offensive.” For more: <http://www.wordwizard.com/phpbb3/viewtopic.php?t=6796>.

636 Letter. Elizabeth (Lizzie) Waters to Jane Waters. August 23, 1871.



The family had this framed memorial image made of Thomas Waters Jr. surrounded by symbolic seaweed. It was later donated to the Admiral Digby Museum in Digby, Nova Scotia, by Thomas' great-great-granddaughter Amaret Smyth. Courtesy Admiral Digby Museum.

Matriarch Elizabeth receives the news

On September 8, Amy finally writes to her mother-in-law Elizabeth in England. It is a heart wrenching letter for Amy to send, and for Elizabeth to receive. Amy has lost her husband and is widowed with six children, aged two to twenty. Poor Elizabeth has given yet another son to the sea—again with no body to bury, or ceremony to find closure.

Having only just accepted that her husband is truly gone, Amy's emotions are still raw:

“Oh dear Mother I dare not think of our sad sad loss the Mate says Tom was coming home from Callao and he was to take the ship, he says his constant talk was about his farm and his family the mate knew each of the children by hearing so much about them it was a sort of sad satisfaction to see him inasmuch that it put an end to suspense, I have had strength given me to bear up under this heavy blow I found I must command my feelings on account of my poor children, I thought Lizzie and Johny [sic] would go mad poor Johnie [sic] says if I never see Papa again I will kill myself the rest all feel it very deeply I think never an hour passed without



Though this photo of Amaret "Amy" (Dakin) Waters is undated, it is likely it was taken after her husband's death. She would never remarry.

one talking of him.... I went last week to St John's to buy mourning the only time I have been out.... I feel deeply with you in the loss of a Son so dearly loved—everything seems changed to me now."⁶³⁷

Amy sews the black and white print mourning dresses for the girls and women, with help from a few friends and her daughters, calling it a "mournful task." She makes hearth rag rugs, one of which she offers to her sister-in-law. She writes to Elizabeth, "...when or if Sarah goes to housekeeping again will you be kind enough to give her the first one sent."⁶³⁸

As she goes about these desolate duties, the realities of Amy's new widowhood are also sinking in, revealing uncertainty about the family's economic future:

"I was getting ready to remove to Marshall Town when I heard the dreadful news Mr. Turnbull advised me to stop here at any rate 'till the affairs can be settled he has all the papers and accounts and he is doing what he can for me. The mate sent the policy of insurance for Tom's part of the ship to England. All the accounts came in the box that was put in

637 Letter. Amy (Dakin) Waters to Elizabeth Waters. September 8, 1871.

638 *Ibid.*

the gig and forwarded to me with two or three books and quantities of old letters were brought to me by the Mate.

“Mr. Turnbull has no proofs yet whether dear Tom drew his wages or not. I am beginning now to look the world in the face, this is my first trouble and sometimes it seems greater than I can bear but there is the sweet sympathising [sic] Jesus to look to for comfort we know that he doeth all things well...”⁶³⁹

Clearly, she won't be receiving whatever Thomas' share of the cargo sale was to be, as the freight was not insured and “consequently a loss.” She considers what to do about the Marshall Town property, not only because of its upkeep, but also because of memories:

“I am thinking of getting some person to take the farm at Marshall Town and give me half of what can be raised the whole farm wants new fencing and my Father thinks it will be best to put some steady person on it there are all sorts of farming tools and plenty of manure to commence with and the land in a good state Tomy [sic] and Johny [sic] often go out holidays but they say everything reminds them of Papa all his things packed away with his own hands tool chests etc. of which he took the keys...”⁶⁴⁰

The captain is also mourned by a large family in England, including his parents (who have now lost five of their children); his sisters Sarah, Jane and Nancy; his brother Ben, sister-in-law Barbara and their four children; and sister Elizabeth, brother-in-law Thomas Pyne and their five children. Despite the ocean of distance between the families, Thomas had always kept close connections with his English family through frequent visits and letter writing.

Grief upon grief

The anguish wasn't over for Amy. She not only withstands the tragic death of her still-young husband in 1871, but will lose her youngest daughter, Sarah, the following year. Sarah Lalia (Sadie) was born June 20, 1869, and dies on December 9, 1872, at three and a half years of age, likely of scarlet fever. Her gravestone in the Marshalltown Churchyard⁶⁴¹ reads:

639 *ibid.*

640 *ibid.*

641 Transcription. Digby Admiral Museum.

LITTLE
SADIE
DIED

Dec 9, 1872

Aged 3 years & 6 months, youngest daughter
of Thomas and Amaret Waters

“Suffer little children to come unto me.” T.C. Dearness



Thomas Jr. & Amy's youngest daughter, Sadie, who died
at age three and a half years. The photo is undated.

Amy's sister-in-law Elizabeth would also lose her husband in 1873, as after only thirteen years together, the much older Thomas Pyne dies.⁶⁴² The forty-three-year-old widow will also be left with a large brood—five children aged twelve and under. Her parents Thomas Sr. and Elizabeth come to live with her and her family at Pyne Cottage, as well as her sisters, who move in to look after their elderly parents.

⁶⁴² Date unknown.

There is a brief time of celebration in 1874 when Tom and Amy's eldest daughter Lizzie is married to William Gilpin. But celebration soon turns to grief when Lizzie dies in childbirth eight months later.

Death in a family was frequent enough in Regency and Victorian England that, as one researcher put it, "it must at times have seemed that "normal" life was merely a pleasant interlude between the regular and interminable bouts of bereavement."⁶⁴³

This is also the time when the long lives of Thomas and Elizabeth Waters come to an end, and they leave the spotlight in the Waters story.

643 *Dust to Dust: Celebrations of Death in Victorian England*. Walvin, James. In *Historical Reflections*. Vol. 9, No. 3 (Fall 1982). P. 363.

Chapter 26

Waters Fall and Rise

OLD FRIENDSHIPS ARE IN EVIDENCE ON JUNE 17, 1874, when Elizabeth's daughter Jane receives a letter written on black-edged mourning paper from her mother's long-time friend and now Lady, Eleanor Nicolls. She writes to express her grief on the loss of seventy-six-year-old Elizabeth, who had died five days before on June 12 of "paralysis" or "chronic cerebral softening"⁶⁴⁴ just three months shy of her and Thomas' sixtieth wedding anniversary.

Lady Eleanor writes from No. 2 Hew Vanbrugh Terrace, Blackheath:

"My Dear Jane,

"It was with a sad heart I saw the announcement of your dear Mother's death in the "Times" of Monday. The loss to you all is very great, but she has gone to her reward. Her life has been a well spent one, she has made her duties the occupation of her whole life, and ever since I have known her I have considered her one of the best wives and Mothers I ever met with. I am grieved to think of your poor Father, who must now be a great age and I would be glad if you would let me hear how he is, and how your sisters are. Pray give my kindest regards to them, in which my daughter joins,

"Believe me

Very truly your

Eleanor Nicolls"⁶⁴⁵

644 These medical descriptions of the time are what we now refer to as dementia.

645 Letter. Eleanor Nicolls to Jane Waters. June 17, 1874.



Though we don't know Elizabeth's age at the time of this portrait, she was obviously fairly elderly. It is the last known image of her.

THE TIMES, MONDAY, JUNE 15, 1874.

DEATHS.

On the 12th inst., at Hook, Surrey, ELIZABETH, the much-loved wife of Major THOMAS WATERS, B.M., aged 76, and in the 60th year of her married life. Friends will kindly accept this intimation.

Elizabeth (Butterworth) Waters' death notice published in *The Times* in 1874.

Elizabeth is buried by her family at 10:30 a.m. on June 19, 1874, in the Hook Churchyard,⁶⁴⁶ having lived to a significant age.

She has borne ten children and raised nine, primarily alone. She has sustained a mother's grief over the deaths of five children before her own—baby Jane, Mary, Joseph, John, and Thomas. She has managed a household that is a far cry from the home of a wealthy merchant in which she was raised, and which is further complicated by the regular and lengthy absences of her mariner husband, either at sea or on recruitment missions in other parts of England. She has regularly battled disease and sickness, both her children's and her own. There is no doubt Elizabeth enjoyed some pleasures, but her life cannot be seen (from what we know) as anything other than an arduous journey.

646 Death Notice. *The Times*. June 15, 1874. Waters Family Scrapbook. P. 4.



The second of two pictures of Thomas Waters Sr., likely at his eldest. 1870s.

Though Elizabeth was eighteen years younger than he, Thomas outlives his wife by a good margin. Five and a half years after Elizabeth's death, on December 6, 1879, Thomas dies of "senile atrophy"⁶⁴⁷ and is buried in Hook, Surrey, England.⁶⁴⁸ He is nearly one hundred years old, as far as we know, given there is no record of his actual birthdate.

On December 10, 1879, his obituary appears in the *London Times* and on December 13, his career is outlined in brief in an obituary in the *Army and Navy Gazette*:

"The oldest officer of the Royal Marines, and probably the oldest to be found on the Navy List, has just passed away within one year of completing a century. Born in 1780, Major Waters entered the Marines at the beginning of the present century (1804) and had at least 75 years' service in that corps. Promotion was in his day even slower than at present, for he was nearly 26 years a subaltern, and after serving 14 years a captain, he went upon the Retired List October 1844, and became a Retired Major⁶⁴⁹ in 1854. By the death of this veteran, a Greenwich Hospital pension of £50 a year, which was granted to him in June 1877, becomes vacant..."⁶⁵⁰

647 What we would call dementia today.

648 The Waters-Cairns Ancestral Compilation. Multiple authors. 1870-2012.

649 This was also called "Brevet Major," an honorary title given to some retired servicemen. For more, [https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brevet_\(military\)](https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brevet_(military)).

650 Obituary. *Army & Navy Gazette*. December 13, 1879.

THE TIMES, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1879.

On the 6th inst., at Hook, Surrey, THOMAS WATERS, Esq., Major in the Royal Marine Light Infantry, in the 99th year of his age. Friends will kindly accept this intimation.

THE EFFECT OF COLD ON THE AGED.—The obituary of *The Times* of yesterday illustrated the effect of the severe weather on the aged, and gave several remarkable instances of longevity. In the case of 11 persons—five ladies and six gentlemen—their united ages amounted to 954 years, giving an average of 86 years and more than eight months to each. The oldest was a gentleman who had reached the great age of 98 years; the youngest of the same sex was 80. Of the ladies the oldest was 91 and the youngest 81. There were also 15 septuagenarians, whose ages averaged 74 years and more than seven months. That the ages of 26 persons in one day's obituary should average 80 years is a remarkable fact.

Thomas Waters Sr.'s death notice and an article on the cold and longevity in the December 10, 1879 *Times*. Whether or not the cold played a role in his death, Thomas was an example of that longevity.

On a final mysterious note, eight years before he dies, Thomas does one curious thing that he has never done in his life: at age ninety-one he lists his birthplace in an official record, the census of 1871. He confirms that he was indeed born in Coombe, Devon, the family seat of the Sillifants. What compels him to do this is a mystery.

Perhaps he needs this information officially recorded to receive his Greenwich Hospital Pension of £50/annum, which will be awarded to him on June 1, 1877, when he is ninety-seven years old. Perhaps it is the first time he somehow learns of his actual birthplace. Perhaps he has always known but was never willing to identify himself in this way until he had retired and reached a great age. Yet another Waters mystery we may never understand.

The 'Italian aunts'

Jane and Nancy had remained unmarried at home until their parents' death, except for a time in 1856 when they had gone to stay with Ben in Lancashire because of their health.

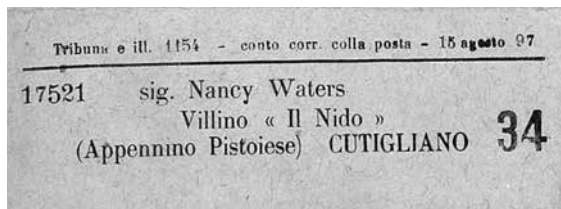
When the three youngest sisters, Sarah, Jane and Nancy, inherit money on the death of their father in 1879, it is Ben who ensures they receive it. With

their newfound cash they decide to travel, according to family historian Sheila Turvey: “Inheriting money on their father’s death in 1879, the three youngest daughters, all unmarried, went off to live in the places where English people gathered in France and Italy.”⁶⁵¹

Family members will visit them there. Elizabeth Pyne’s children visit, and once Ben sends his three daughters to join their “Italian aunts” for a memorable holiday.⁶⁵²



Below this image in the Amy (Dakin) Waters Scrapbook, written by Jane Waters is this description: “The Church of Santa Maria Novella, called by Michelangelo “the Bride” on account of its beauty. Our house is close by this church. Jane Waters 1890.”



A ticket for Nancy Waters to travel to an Italian holiday spot dated August 15, 1897.

651 *The Waters Family, Volume I*. Turvey, Sheila. P. 22.

652 *ibid.*

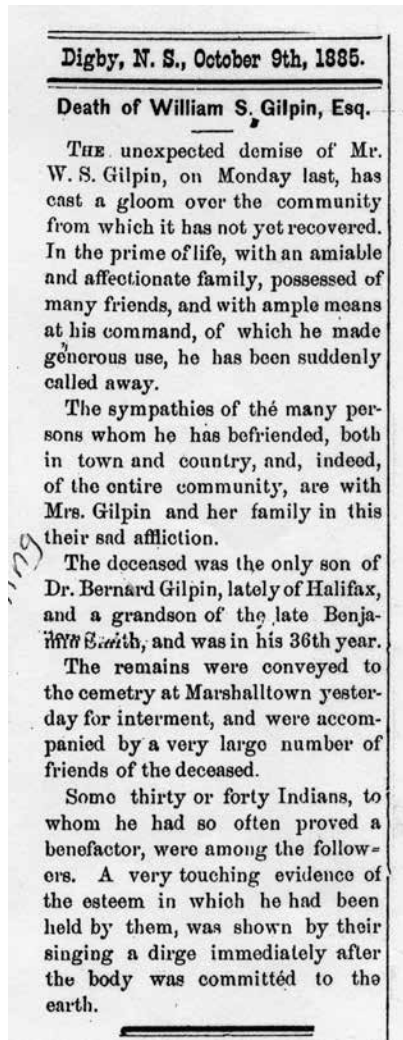
Chapter 27

Thomas & Amy's Children Grow Up

AFTER THE SHIPWRECK DEATH OF THEIR FATHER, Thomas and Amy's children, Lizzie, Mary, Alice, Amy, Thomas, John, and Benjamin move on. Some are now starting families of their own, and we know more about some of the children's lives than others. Much is known about the two eldest Waters daughters, Lizzie and Mary, and their in-laws, the Gilpins—in fact, the Admiral Digby Museum in Digby, Nova Scotia is a hub of information about the Gilpins, as well as containing artifacts from Thomas Waters, Jr.

By 1875, Lizzie has died, and her younger sister Mary weds her widower, William Gilpin. Just a year and a half after her sister's death, on September 2, 1876, in Eastport, Maine, Mary and William are wed. They go on to have five children—Charlotte (b. 1877), Bernard (b. 1878), William (b. 1879), Mary (b. 1882) and Henry (b. 1884).

Mary's life will be marked with more tragedy than the loss of her father and eldest sister. In 1885, at the age of thirty-two, she is widowed when William Gilpin dies due to a moose-hunting accident on October 9. In 1886, she loses her four-year-old daughter Mary. In 1898 her fourteen-year-old son Henry dies, possibly by suicide. Her oldest son Bernard spends forty years in an insane asylum before dying in 1940. Her second oldest son Will goes to sea and then World War I, dying in 1916.



William Gilpin's obituary published on October 9, 1885 in a Digby, Nova Scotia newspaper.

Mary's daughter Charlotte becomes an historical scholar and is a life-long resident of Digby. She lives to be a century old, and after she dies, it becomes a common occurrence for people who work at the Admiral Digby Museum to hear slamming doors and ringing doorbells when the doors are locked, and the bells have been disabled. One paranormal theory is that it is Charlotte's ghost.⁶⁵³

653 'We really don't have an explanation for that either': Ghost stories from the Admiral Digby Museum. Saltwire website. Found 4/2/21 at <https://www.saltwire.com/nova-scotia/news/we-really-dont-have-an-explanation-for-that-either-ghost-stories-from-the-admiral-digby-museum-255205/>.

In 1892, Mary's father-in-law Dr. John Bernard Gilpin passes away, leaving his entire substantial estate to his elderly sister. Mary contests the will, and the case goes to the Supreme Court, but we don't know the outcome. None of Mary's children marry, and when the last of Mary's children dies with no children, this line of the Waters family ends.

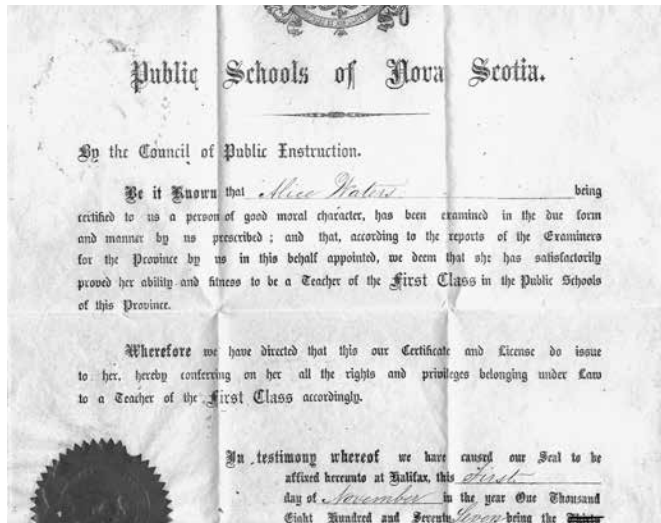
By the time she is a young woman, third-born Alice had already dealt with tremendous losses. Her father Thomas Waters Jr. had been tragically lost at sea when she was sixteen. When she was not quite eighteen, her baby sister Sarah Laliah died of scarlet fever, and three years later in 1875 her eldest sister Lizzie died during childbirth. Alice plans to be a teacher, and studies for her teaching certificate, which she is given on November 1, 1877, at twenty-two years of age. She is assigned the post of primary school teacher in Digby for the 1881-82 school year, for which she is paid \$100. This position will put her directly in the path of her future husband and is a significant turning point in the Waters story.

The fourth-born daughter Amaret⁶⁵⁴ is one character about whom we have little information. She marries Daniel Huxley at Augusta or Bangor, Maine



A young Alice Waters in 1874.

654 Pronounced "Am'-ee." She was known to many as "Aunt Amy."



Alice Waters' teaching certificate, dated November 1, 1877, issued by the Public Schools of Nova Scotia, attests her to be "a person of good moral character."

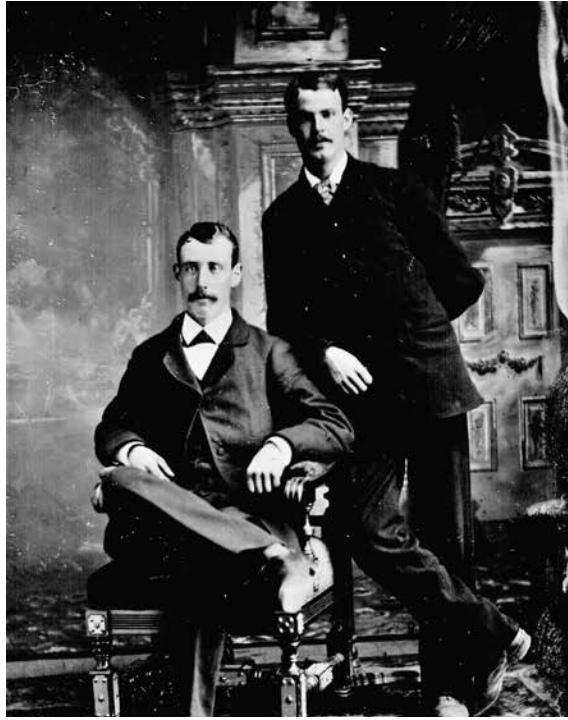


Amy (Waters) Huxley with her daughter Hazel at their home in Augusta, Maine. Mid-1890s.

on November 2, 1886. They have one daughter, Hazel.⁶⁵⁵ Amy lives to be eighty-four years old.

Following the birth of the four girls came three surviving boys. Little is known about Thomas and John, the first two sons, who were both born at sea. We do know that Thomas grows up to farm in New Zealand and marries Theresa McLaughlin. They have one daughter who marries a British soldier and lives in England.

⁶⁵⁵ Her husband dies when Hazel is young and Amy moves to Massachusetts where Hazel goes to Bridgewater Normal School and then to South Attleboro where Hazel teaches until within a year of retirement when her mother dies. Hazel retires and later marries Howard Kempton in May 1950. They have no family.

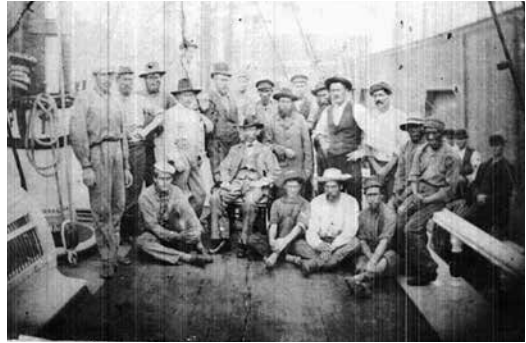
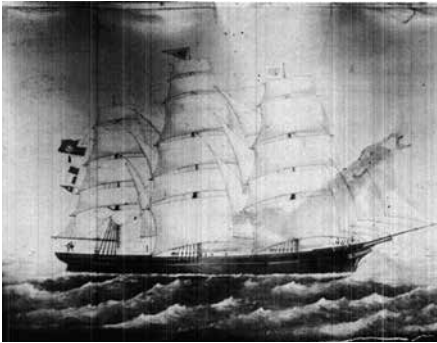


Thomas Jr. & Amy's sons Thomas and John, born at sea. The image is undated, and as it is the only adult image of them, it's difficult to even identify which is which. 1880s.

Like his father and grandfather, John goes to sea. We don't know when he started or finished, but we do have records and images of at least one tour he did on a ship called *Governor Tilley* out of Saint John, New Brunswick. Registered in 1875, the 1,419-tonne schooner was captained by Master James Dickson on a tour beginning August 1880 and ending in Liverpool fifteen months later.⁶⁵⁶

Images found in Amy (Dakin) Waters' scrapbook illustrated this, and someone must have known John Waters had been on this ship, as there was a faint scribble which read "find John." This led to research to see if more could be discovered about the ship and voyage. The Crew Agreement confirms that John sailed on this ship, and the details are shared. One additional note on the agreement's first page indicated there was no alcohol on board: "At Masters option, no grog allowed."

656 *Crew Agreement*. Maritime History Archive. Memorial University. Found 5/29/22 at https://mha.mun.ca/mha/1881/onview.php?Record_ID=324470&CrewList.



The images of Governor Tilley and some of her crew. The top two images are from Amy (Dakin) Waters' scrapbook. The crew agreement is from the Maritime History Archive. https://mha.mun.ca/mha/1881/onview.php?Record_ID=324460&pagev=1.

2683

AGREEMENT AND ACCOUNT OF CREW.
FOREIGN-GOING SHIP.

AGREEMENT No. 105456

REGULATED IN SIXTEEN PAGES.

Eng. 1
See A. 1881-82.

2 NOV 21

REGISTRATION Fee ... 40 s. d.
Discharging Fee ... 12 s. d.

Names of Ship: *Governor Tilley 72207* (Official No.)
 Port and Registry: *St John (A.B.)* (Port) - *1875 1453 1419* (Registry)

REGISTERED TONNAGE OF SHIP
 or tonnage registered under the Act of 1879, Sec. 4, 23.

Name: *J. F. Brueckle South* (Master)
 Address: *8 Thompson Street, St. John*

No. of Bunks for when accommodation is certified. (See A. 1879, Sec. 4, 23.)	Registered Tonnage.		Neutral Horse-power of Engines (if any).	
	Gross.	Net.	H.P.	H.P.
30	5.	0		

Distance in feet and inches between centre of Mainmast and the fore and after edge of the mizzenmast, the position of the Fore Mast above it. S. I. B. A.

The several Persons whose names are hereto subscribed and whose descriptions are mentioned on the under side or sides, and of whom ... are engaged as follows, hereby agree to serve on board the said Ship, ...

Subscribers:
As Masters of the ship
As Crew allowed

And the Crew agree to conduct themselves in an orderly, faithful, honest, and sober manner, and to be at all times diligent in their respective Duties, and to be obedient to the lawful Commands of the said Master, or of any Person who shall lawfully succeed him, and of their Superior Officers, in every thing relating to the said Ship and the Stores and Cargo thereof, whether on board, in boats, or on shore in consideration of which Services to be fully performed, the said Master hereby agrees to pay to the said Crew as wages the Stowage and their Names respectively appended, and to supply them with Provisions according to the above Stowage, and it is hereby agreed, that any Indebtedness or other account of any kind of the Ship's Cargo or Stores shall be made good to the Owner out of the Wages of the Person guilty of the same; And if any Person enters himself as qualified for a duty which he proves incompetent to perform, his Wages shall be reduced in proportion to his incompetency: And it is also agreed, that the Regulations authorized by the Board of Trade, which are printed hereto, and annexed, shall be observed.

And it is also agreed, that if any Member of the Crew considers himself to be aggrieved by any breach of the above agreement, he shall represent the same to the said Master or Officer in charge of the Ship in a quiet and temperate manner, who shall thereupon take such steps as the case may require: And it is also agreed, that the said Ship shall be considered as fully manned with eight hundred and all other crew members.

*The authority of the Owner or Agent for the allotments mentioned within is in my possession.
 Signature: *Wm. ...* (Superintendent, Office of Customs, St. John)

Witnessed whereof the said parties have subscribed their Names on the other Side or Sides hereof on the days against their respective Signatures mentioned.

Signed by *Wm. ...* Master, on the *8* day of *October*, 18*82*.

Date of Commencement of Voyage.	Port at which Voyage commences.	Date of Termination of Voyage.	Port at which Voyage terminates.	Date of Delivery of Line or Supermarket.	I hereby declare to the truth of the Entries in this Agreement and Account of Crew, &c.
<i>8-7-82</i>	<i>Cardiff</i>	<i>13/10/82</i>	<i>St John</i>	<i>11/10/82</i>	<i>Wm. ...</i> (Master)

These Certificates to be filled up at the end of the Voyage.

* This the Voyage is to be completed, all the parties named in which the Ship is to be used, or, if that cannot be done, the general nature and probable length of the Voyage to be stated.
 * There are to be inserted the names of any of the Regulations for preventing Discipline used by the Board of Trade and printed on the last page hereof which the parties agree to obey.
 * There are other regulations to be inserted to which the parties agree, and which are not contained in the Act.
 * This Form must not be destroyed, no increase may be taken out of it, and none may be added or subtracted. Care should be taken that the names of the parties named in the above Form are not altered, and that the date of the completion of the Voyage is correctly stated. If there were more than one agreement, the number for which agreement is provided in the Form, on a different Form, should be indicated and noted. [Reverse Page]



One of a number of images from newspapers that depict New Zealand life around the turn of the century when John & Tom Waters were living there. From Amy (Dakin) Waters Scrapbook.

The eighteen-year-old John was one of only two ordinary seamen out of forty-seven crew members. Ordinary seamen were at the bottom of the pay scale, and he received £1.10/month. Upon discharge on October 13, 1881, he received wages of £16.52.⁶⁵⁷

At some point, John marries Sarah MacIntosh in Boston, Massachusetts, and farms in or near New Plymouth, New Zealand. They have no children.⁶⁵⁸

Benjamin the pharmacist

Benjamin, the youngest, is only six years old when his father Thomas is shipwrecked and perishes, but at age sixteen he goes to sea as a mercantile marine in 1881. He is discharged on May 7, 1884, at age nineteen. Benjamin keeps a journal during this time, of which dozens of pages survive.

Benjamin's diary reveals an active and creative mind and is full of quirky gems of information about the time in which he lives. We note that he practices drawing the flags of various European countries, writes out the months in calendar form, and has an "autograph album" page, presumably signed by friends.

Not unlike twentieth century high school yearbook signings, some are full of cheek. One inebriated friend pens, "Alas! Alas! I am so drunk I cannot write

⁶⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁶⁵⁸ When Amy (Dakin) Waters dies in 1910, John and Thomas receive a share of her estate, and their addresses are both listed as Teranaki County, New Zealand.

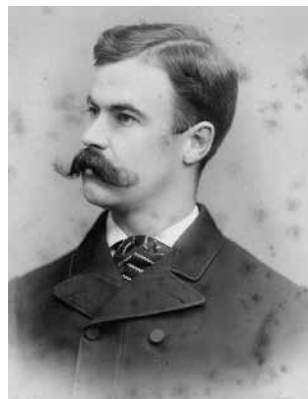
CERTIFICATE OF DISCHARGE FOR SEAMEN. (D)				
Name of Ship.	Official Number.	Type of Registry.	Registered Tonnage.	Kind of Voyage or Employment.
<i>Hudson</i>		<i>St John</i>	<i>1477</i>	<i>Foreign</i>
Name of Seaman.	Place of Birth.	Date of Birth.		
<i>B. Waters</i>	<i>Digby</i>	<i>1865</i>		
Capacity.	Date of Entry.	Date of Discharge.	Place of Discharge.	
<i>OS</i>	<i>Dec 31st</i>	<i>May 1st</i>	<i>St John</i>	
Character for Ability in whatever Capacity.		Character for Conduct.		
<i>W. G.</i>		<i>W. G.</i>		
I certify that the above particulars are correct, and that the above named Seaman was discharged accordingly.				
Dated at Saint John, N. B., this <i>18</i> <i>May</i> 188 <i>4</i>				
(Countersigned): <i>Beng. Waters</i>			<i>J. S. Allison</i> Master. <i>Shipping Master.</i>	
NOTE.—One of these Certificates must be filed up and delivered to every Seaman who is discharged.				

Benjamin's discharge from the mercantile marines in 1884. He was nineteen years old.

in your album..." Others quote sentimental verse, like: "As ripples follow a ship at sea, so may happiness follow thee..." and "In the golden chain of friendship count me as a link..."⁶⁵⁹

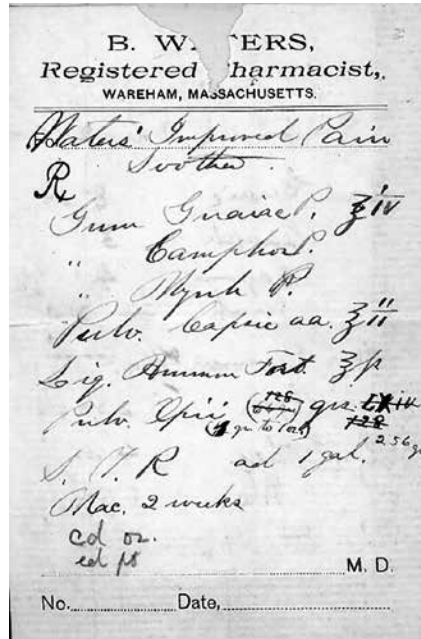
Benjamin's curiosity about pharmacy from a young age is clear from the surviving diary pages, in which he notes that at age thirteen he began working in a pharmacy before he went to sea.

Benjamin marries Cassie Maude Dennison (b. January 15, 1865) on October 1, 1887, in Digby. Two years prior, in 1885, he buys out the drug business



Benjamin and his wife, Cassie Maude (Dennison) Waters. Late 1880s.

659 Journal. Benjamin Waters. P. 49.



Benjamin's interest in pharmacy is clear in numerous medicinal recipes such as "Poor Man's Syrup," "Witch Hazel Cold Cream" and "Emetic for Croup." He cuts and pastes in several external references as well, such as a table for calculating interest, and a prescription for pain relief from what would become his practice, "B. Waters, Registered Pharmacist, Wareham, Mass." The bottom image is of the inside of his pharmacy. Ben is on the far right.

of Amaret (Dakin) Waters' cousin Archie Dakin in Wareham, Massachusetts where he lives and continues in business for the rest of his life.⁶⁶⁰

Ben and Cassie's children are Benjamin Percy (b. August 20, 1888) and twin daughters, Edith and Elsie (b. February 9, 1892).

660 Benjamin dies on August 4, 1941. Cassie dies fifteen years earlier, on April 12, 1926.

Chapter 28

The New Matriarch & Patriarch

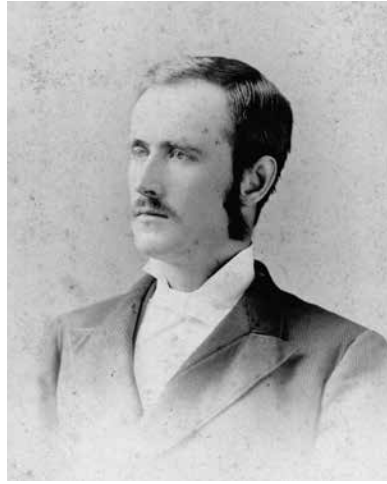
AMONG THOMAS AND AMY'S CHILDREN, Alice is the only one whose children will continue this line of the Waters family; thus, she will soon take centre stage in the family drama.

As a new teacher at the Digby School in 1880, Alice lives near her boss, the principal of the academy, and becomes friends with his wife. A little group of Presbyterians had managed to build a small church, but they couldn't afford to have a minister, so they use the services of a student (catechist) during the summer months. As a dedicated Presbyterian who wanted to help, the principal houses the catechists, refusing to take money for room and board. According to the principal's daughter, Muriel Maxwell, "...one summer the catechist was a tall, handsome youth from P.E. Island. He and Alice Watters [sic] met at our house, fell in love, and later married."⁶⁶¹

A patriarch in training

The young catechist is John Andrew (J.A.) Cairns, whose father had emigrated from Dumfriesshire, Scotland to P.E.I. with his own parents in 1840. Born on August 13, 1854, J.A. had been raised on a farm, and at some point, became

661 *Old N.S. Rocking Chair*. Country Calendar section, *Pictou Advocate*. Maxwell, Muriel. November 3, 1966.



An undated photo of the “tall, handsome” young John A. Cairns.

determined to be a preacher. He had graduated from Dalhousie University in spring of 1878 with a B.A. and from the Princeton Theological Seminary in spring of 1881 with his M.A..⁶⁶²

In 1875, while at Dalhousie, he decides to begin a diary.⁶⁶³ On its first pages and sprinkled throughout the book, he lists recipes for making a variety of useful substances including Turner’s cement, waterproof whitewash, stove polish, various coloured inks, liquid glue and tracing paper. There are cures for consumption and smallpox; directions for cutting glass and polishing and staining wood. One note indicates the “test for kerosene” which was “Kerosene that ignites when poured in a saucer is dangerous.”⁶⁶⁴

Though his stated purpose at the beginning of the diary is to document daily events, it is primarily a preparation book for his own sermons and a study book for notes on the sermons of others. One entry describes his first sermon:

“Came to Digby on Saturday May 3rd. Went to Mr. McRae’s house. In evening went out to Bay View & stayed at Mrs. Turnbull’s. In the morning Preached from Luke 24-26. About 50 people present. Good attention. My first sermon. If any good results follow it will be, as always, by God’s direct power & agency.”⁶⁶⁵

662 *The Rev. John A. Cairns, M.A., The Scotsburn Congregation Pictou County*. Murray, John. (1925). P. 58.

663 J.A.’s diary has listings through 1878 and is 224 pages in length.

664 *Diary*. John (J.A.) Cairns. December 6, 1875. P. 1-2.

665 *ibid.* P. 58.

Course for Consumpt.
 Crude petroleum is rather too nau-
 seous, so take semi solid oil, and
 mix with inert vegetable powder
 into 3-5 gr. pills, to be taken from
 3-5 doses daily.

Whether this unappealing pill worked or not is a mystery. The recipe reads:
 "Crude petroleum is rather too nauseous, so take some solid oil, and mix with
 inert vegetable powder into 3-5 gr. pills, to be taken from 3-5 doses daily."

Bay View			Present	Bear River			
May	3	1st. Luke 24-26	50	May	11	Preaching, 1st. Jno. III. 16	100
May	10	Prayer meeting. Luke 24-26	32	18		Act. 9-16	12
May	11	Preaching. John III. 16	37	25		Mat. 11-28	30
May	17	Prayer meeting. Miss. Fort. built. Mat. 7.	32	June	1	Spum. 32-23	30
	18	Preaching. Heb. 9. 6	50		8	Song. Sol. 1. 4	35
	24	Prayer meeting. Mat. 13-24	32		15	Heb. II. 3.	35
		Preaching. Mat. 11. 28	50		22	Eph. III. 15	32
	31	Prayer meet. wise & fool. Ver. 9.	25	July	6	Revel. 3-20	45
June	1	Preaching. Spum. 32-23	58		13	Rom. 1. 16	50
	7	Prayer meeting. Mat. 13. 31	30	July	20	Exek. 17-24	35
	8	Preaching. Song. Sol. 1. 4	60				729 2
	14	Prayer meet. Mat. 13. 31	35				33
	18	Preaching. Heb. II. 3	55				
	21	P. Meet. Luke 15. Pro. 16	35				
	22	Preaching. Eph. III. 15	55				
	25	P. Meet. Jno. X. 1-4	45	Aug	3	Communion	80
	29	Preaching. 1st. 16. 3	48	July	6	P. Meet. Luke 16. 19-21	58
July	3	P. Meet. Jno. X. 6-10	48		10	Preaching. Heb. 2. 1	48
	6	Preaching. Revelat. 3-20	66		14	P. Meet. Next night	
	9	P. Meet. Mat. 29. 18-23	48		17		
	13	Preaching. 1st. 1. 16	70				
	16	P. Meet. Barron big tree.	35				
	20	Preaching. Exek. 17-24	75				
	24	P. Meet. Improbability	45				

J.A.'s list of sermons shows he kept a precise set of statistics about attendance.

It was the first of some thirty-five sermons made nearly every Sunday from May 3 through August 13, 1880. Some Sundays he travels between Bay View and Bear River to deliver two sermons. He gave communion once and led two prayer meetings in August. The congregations ranged from twenty-five at the

smallest to one hundred. By his own calculations, he averaged thirty-three audience members.

During that summer of sermons, J.A. gets a letter from his sister Jannet that gives us a picture into the home environment in which he was raised. His siblings include the eldest, Mary, a year older than John, and two brothers, Robert and Christopher,⁶⁶⁶ all of whom have been raised on a farm that includes a bustling sheep enterprise typical of the area:

“We are done the crop all but the buckwheat & turnips, Christopher has been hauling mud this week we shored our sheep to-day, we have thirty-two sheep & twenty-six lambs. We have two foals, Tom is Robert’s & Bell Christopher’s, none for poor Jannet.”⁶⁶⁷

J.A. is ordained in 1882 and enters in the ministry of the Presbyterian Church at Upper Musquodoboit, Nova Scotia. He lives in a boarding house and is paid \$30 per quarter.

In March, Jannet writes to alert him to the fact that one of their friends is waiting to be married until he can return and do the ceremony himself, which either he or his family has offered for him to do:

“Mother was telling Maggie about you marrying your first couple and that you would be home in June if any of the friends wanted to be married you would perform the ceremony, she said right away, I’ll wait for him...”⁶⁶⁸

Perhaps J.A. and his new bride would go back to Freetown to see family in June, because J.A. and Alice are wed at Bayview Church, located at 1074 Lighthouse Road, Bay View, Nova Scotia, on June 20, 1882.⁶⁶⁹ We know they spent at least part of their honeymoon visiting her family in England, according to later reminiscences by Alice’s first cousin once removed, Geoff Hewson:

“My cousin’s name was Mrs. Cairns and her husband was a Presbyterian minister. Mr. Cairns came from P.E.I and Mrs. Cairns came from Nova Scotia. When they got married they had gone over to England on their honeymoon and they met all our crowd over there.”⁶⁷⁰

666 The Waters-Cairns Ancestral Compilation 1870-2012. Multiple authors. P. 69.

667 Letter. Jannet Cairns to her brother John (J.A.) Cairns. June 9, 1880.

668 Letter. Jannet Cairns to J.A. Cairns. March 20, 1882.

669 The Waters-Cairns Ancestral Compilation 1870-2012. Multiple authors. P. 52. Alice’s great-great-granddaughter Margaret Hewson currently wears her wedding ring.

670 *Geoffrey Mark Hewson: A Biography*. Smyth, Stuart. 1982.



Bayview Church, where the Rev. J.A. Cairns and Alice Waters were married in 1882.



The Reverend and Alice as a young married couple. Early 1880s.

They start a family right away. Janet is born August 15, 1883, and her mother writes lovely stories about her to her cousin May in England, like this one:

“I wonder if you saw & heard Janet you would think her so wonderfully clever as we do, of course not, but everyone praises her so much to us that it is quite hard for us not to think her more clever than other children, but she really is not any different from any other ordinary bright child,

thoroughly childish in thought word & deed, but very affectionate. She tries to be my helper she can almost set the table, and sweeps the floor nicely with small broom & dust-pan. She threads her beads over and over, has tea-parties of one-her-self-, dresses & undresses her dolls, plays with her kitten ‘Minnie’.”⁶⁷¹

In the winter of 1887, four months pregnant with her second child, Alice gives a colourful description of a wedding her husband conducted with a most reluctant bride:

“We have had some funny weddings this winter, the last one was a widower of 43 married to a widow of 47, the wedding took place at 2 o’clock at the widows house in the kitchen, everything was clean, the two small tables were covered with white clothes, two or three well worn mats on the floor, three or four chairs a bench and a seaman’s (“chest”) were the seating accomadation [sic], the groom was just finishing his toilet before a small glass in the little kitchen when we went in, then he & the bride went into a place partly boarded off so as to walk out in state arm in arm to take their place before the minister but the bride was almost too bashful to come out, so the groom got a little cross and bounced out alone, saying, “You can come or stay, I’m out” he then stood with his back to the partitioned off place, warming his hands over a roaring kitchen cooking stove, —he was already too warm—the bride came out in bashful desperation, stood close behind him, &, the ceremony began, by degrees they got side by side, the poor groom was nearly roasted by the hot fire & trying occasion, he had to keep rubbing his face with his handkerchief, after they were married on old lady got out the black tea-pot, emptied out the tea leaves left from the last brewing, and put some more tea in and put it on the stove to boil & boil & boil. Then some girls flew around and got bread from up stairs, some cake from a closet, tough pies from a bedroom, a fruit cake from the aforementioned chest, the old lady mixed up some apple-sauce, they set the table & the bride & groom, minister & wife, and the eldest of the guests sat down to a wedding repast at half-past two. “Everything was clean, the bread was light & good, the cake was not nice, and so though we had had our dinner not three hours before we made quite a respectable

671 Letter. Alice Cairns to May Waters. February 1-May 5, 1887.

show of eating, we drank milk & water, as a more wholesome beverage than well stewed tea, we had had a pleasant sleigh drive to the house often miles-8 shillings was the fee.”⁶⁷²

The voice of Alice

The examples above are just a glimpse into the fifty letters, twenty-four years of diary entries, and other writings by Alice Cairns in the Hewson Archive which vividly portray Alice Cairns in all her glory: her intelligence, wit, fortitude, faith and compassion. Many of her letters are written to her cousin in England, May Waters, daughter of Ben and Barbara Waters, with whom she carries on a life-long correspondence.

Alice is an adept writer; a talent she must inherit from her father and grandfather, the Thomas Waters Junior and Senior. Like them, she has a penchant for keen observation, vigorous storytelling, humour and colourful description. It is primarily due to her that we know as much as we do about the daily lives of our Canadian pioneer ancestors, and her correspondence with her family in England also showcases much of their family’s activities through the first half of the twentieth century.

672 Letter. Alice Cairns to May Waters. February 1, 1887.

Chapter 29

Family, Congregation & Temperance Grows

ON MARCH 10, 1887, the Reverend is transferred 400 kilometres away to minister to the Bethel Church in Scotsburn and Saltspring in Pictou County. It is a big move for the family from the relatively urban environment near Digby on the southwest part of the island to the far-flung northeast end and a small, rural population adjacent to Mi'kmaq Indian land, already made into a federal reserve.

The aboriginal population had been decimated in the previous century by the arrival of white Europeans who spread smallpox and tuberculosis that the First Nations people lacked immunity to. The Europeans had also brought alcohol to develop trade, creating another scourge among the Mi'kmaq.

In 1878, Canadian parliament passed the Canada Temperance Act, more commonly known as the Scott Act. By 1889, most of the Maritimes had adopted prohibition, along with more than half the counties in Ontario.⁶⁷³ Numerous anti-alcohol organizations that sprung up across the dominion in mid-century had influenced many of these communities of the value of prohibition. One such organization was the I.O.G.T., or the International Order of Good Templars.

673 *Cross-Border Crusades: The Binational Temperance Movement in Washington and British Columbia*. Moore, Stephen T. In *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly*. Volume 98, No. 3. P. 133. Found 6/3/22 at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40492029>.



The Bethel Church in Scotsburn where the Rev. preached for eleven years.

It was an influential organization that accepted both men and women into its temperance fraternity. The Good Templars, in fact, “comprised the world’s largest and most militant teetotal organization in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.”⁶⁷⁴

One chapter, the Mayflower Lodge, was pleased to reprint one of the Rev. Cairns’ earliest sermons on the evils of numerous sins, including alcohol. Delivered at Shubenacadie on September 18, it was based on the two Bible verses from Deuteronomy and Romans, the first which urged the faithful to “make a battlement for thy roof,” and not to eat meat or drink wine.

Using the metaphor of keeping your house safe, the Reverend decried the use of alcohol as universally detrimental. Full of quotations of fact and scientific measurement, its four thousand words present a balanced and no doubt powerfully persuasive argument that the Prohibitionists would have lauded. He concludes:

“Let us, therefore, be helpers in this great work. The church of God should lead in this great work of reform. It should take its place in the front rank of the battle line, and not away back in the rear among the baggage. The churches of Christ are beginning to wake up to their duty. They all give no uncertain sound. The public opinion on this subject is rapidly changing. The world is beginning to realize that the drink traffic is directly antagonistic

674 *Alcohol and Drugs in North America: A Historical Encyclopedia. Volume 1.* Fahey, David M. & Miller, Jon S. August 27, 2013. P. 281. Found 6/3/22 at https://www.google.com/books/edition/Alcohol_and_Drugs_in_North_America_A_His/UXHYAQAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=International+Organisation+of+Good+Templars+in+1887+Nova+Scotia&pg=PA284&printsec=frontcover.

to the spirit and teaching of Christ. It antagonizes health and home, the school and church, prosperity and politics, the community and nation.”⁶⁷⁵

A congregation times three

When the Reverend accepts the assignment to Bethel Church in Scotsburn and Saltspring, he takes on not only those church communities, but a third, Hermon Church of Millsville. It is a tasking assignment:

“The addition of Hermon Church made his [Rev. Cairns] congregation unusually large and laborious. It extended from the Black River on the north to Mount Tom on the south, a distance of nearly twenty miles, and from Scotch Hill on the east to the summit of Dalhousie Mountain on the west, a distance of fifteen or twenty miles. It covered a [sic] area of over three hundred square miles.”⁶⁷⁶

However, J.A.’s youth and energy would serve him well: “Mr. Cairns, with his splendid body, alert mind and buoyant temperament, proved himself equal to the task of ministering successfully to this immense field...”⁶⁷⁷

Alice’s husband must travel constantly to keep up with his far-flung ministerial tasks and is mostly gone during these years. After his retirement J.A. wrote about this time:

“It required a great deal of driving, especially in visiting the sick during the week and in preaching three times every Sabbath at three different points, from five to seven miles apart. But never had any minister a more loyal people, or a kinder and more sympathetic congregation...”⁶⁷⁸

Growing family a handful

Just three months after J.A. receives his widespread congregation, on June 21, 1887, Alice gives birth to their second child who will become his father’s namesake, John Andrew Jr.

675 Sermon. Cairns, J.A. Delivered September 18, 1887. Published by Mayflower Lodge, I.O.G.T. P. 8. Found 4/22/22 at <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/aeu.ark:/13960/t2z325h2k>.

676 *The Rev. John A. Cairns, M.A., The Scotsburn Congregation Pictou County*. Murray, John. 1925. P. 58.

677 *ibid.*

678 John Cairns, quoted in *The Rev. John A. Cairns, M.A., The Scotsburn Congregation Pictou County*. Murray, John. (1925). P. 59.

During that same year the family will move into a manse built by the congregation on land purchased as a glebe⁶⁷⁹ near the church. J.A. will plant “all the hedges and fruit trees by which the manse grounds are adorned, with his own hands.”⁶⁸⁰ Even then, J.A. appears to have been nearly as interested in planting as in spreading the scripture, his farm upbringing having given him many skills and a love of the land.

Alice is pregnant almost immediately following J.A. Jr.’s birth, delivering the fourth Amaret (and another Amy) of the Waters family on April 9, 1888, just ten months after her previous delivery. Nearly four years pass before another baby, Barbara, is born on February 7, 1892. Sadly, she dies only five months later, on June 24.⁶⁸¹ She is buried in the church graveyard at the manse where the family lives.

Two boys will complete the family—Thomas (“Tom”) born May 1, 1893, and Robert (“Bob”) born two and a half years later, on September 12, 1895.

Alice is forty years old by the time she has her last child in 1895, and she now has a brood of five to raise. The Reverend is away much of the time attending to his duties, and Alice employs a few girls, and maybe some friends and neighbours, who help from time to time. Eliza Smart and Rosie and Marry McIntosh help



The Cairns family in Nova Scotia. Front row: Alice with Bob on lap, J.A. with Tom in front, Janet. Back row: Amy, John.

679 A plot of cultivated land belonging or yielding revenue to a parish church. Found 5/31/22 on <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/glebe>. Glebe land was often where the manse was built to house a minister and his family.

680 *The Rev. John A. Cairns, M.A., The Scotsburn Congregation Pictou County*. Murray, John. 1925. P. 59.

681 *The Waters-Cairns Ancestral Compilation 1870-2012*. Multiple authors. P. 14.

pick fruit and do other chores. Several women seem to be regular helpers: Maria, who may live with them, and seems to be chronically infirm; a Miss Thompson, and two Libbies—one of whom is much more helpful than the other:

“Maria came home yesterday with her sore leg which is a great nuisance, she straned [sic] the cords by the knee somehow. Libbie Henry is with her quite a pretty girl, but not of much use in taking care of the baby, or in doing anything. Libbie Grant will stay till Saturday. We get along quite well, put down 10 quarts of preserves to-day, gooseberries. Currants are all ripe Tom says Ma-ir for Maria so prettily. I cannot keep him from eating gooseberries & currants, still he manages to keep well.”⁶⁸²

A few months before Alice would deliver their last son Robert, in the summer of 1895, twelve-year-old Janet takes a solo trip from Scotsburn to visit her Grandma Amy Waters, Aunt May Gilpin and cousins back in Digby. She will stay there from mid-July until sometime after July 25.⁶⁸³

During her vacation, Janet’s parents write her nearly every day. From their letters, we learn that the family subsists on a healthy diet of fresh fish, turkey, eggs, a variety of wild fruit such as gooseberries and red currants, and vegetables. In a few months, Alice will give birth to her last child, Robert, but during this summer when her eldest is away on her trip, she is juggling all the housework, gardening, and corralling of John (8), Amy (7), and Tom, just past his second birthday:

“Papa brought home six nice large frozen fresh shad to-night. My turkeys are all living but Tom is just wild to catch them. Mrs. Turk still lays & John eats the eggs...How was your lunch? All mixed up with your purse nightgown & rubbers? I asked Tom where Janet was and he said ‘All gone’.”⁶⁸⁴

It is her first time away from her family and early on, her mother urges her to fight the homesickness Janet has already written to her about:

“Now for your letter. If you have not started for home and are not too homesick I would like you to stay till Cassie McKay & Rena Matheson come. But yet if you really feel miserable come home. I want your visit to do you good not harm. You would have to watch for a chance with some

682 Letter. Alice Cairns to daughter Janet Cairns. July 18, 1895.

683 The last letter from Alice to her daughter in the collection is July 25, and it implies Janet will soon be home.

684 Letter. Alice Cairns to Janet Cairns. July 17, 1895.

one to St. John to take care of you till you were put on the train in St. John. Have you got it planned?

“Try and not be homesick, just think of dragging after the baby all day, running errands upstairs & down, helping Maria with her lame leg, being bothered by John, teased by Amy etc.

“John has a new eight cent straw hat. Tom just loves to get Johns hats on and march out doors. Papa put John’s coat on him the other day and he did not want it taken off.”⁶⁸⁵

As Janet’s visit draws to a close, her mother writes her a final letter, in which Alice mentions her own weight, a topic she will often refer to with matter-of-factness and humour throughout her life:

“Papa was up for the mail...& brought down your letter. You can get another apron for yourself. I am astonished that Uncle John is married I wonder who he got. You can get the corsets too, perhaps they will help to keep you straight. I remember I got a pair when your size, and they supported my back and I never got another pair till I got fat...One of my turkeys got drowned in one of the manure water barrels, it looked so nice & large & then dead, & one got hurt to-day with a crow or hawk.”⁶⁸⁶

Alice reports on Tom’s most recent antics, and then hints again at Janet’s homesickness, which must be acute, as she is planning to come home soon:

“Tom will be glad to see you, he does not like to be away from me now. If he thinks I am distressed he puts his little face close to mine & draws my head down on his cheek. Get anything you really need, if you have your chemise & drawers made separate you need waists to button your petticoats on. Your room is all nicely cleaned. Tom goes in there in such an “at home” way and begins to pull things down & off, but we seize him at once & take him away & shut the door tight...I hope you go in bathing some. Of course I would like you to stay longer, but if you are too homesick come home that was our bargain...”⁶⁸⁷

685 Letter. Alice Cairns to Janet Cairns. July 18, 1895.

686 Letter. Alice Cairns to Janet Cairns. July 25, 1895.

687 *ibid.*



Alice Cairns with children Bob and Janet, wrapped up for a winter outing in Nova Scotia. It's unclear if Alice is wearing a coat or is wrapped in a giant blanket.

After eleven years at Bethel Church, J.A. accepts a call to Barney's River and Glenholm on December 10, 1898, where he would minister for four years.⁶⁸⁸ J.A. was clearly proud of the work he and his congregations had accomplished in that decade at Bethel:

“No minister ever had a better session of elders, board of managers, or church choir. The missionary interest grew rapidly from year to year. During the last six years of my pastorate, the whole congregation raised as much money for missionary work as they paid me in salary, and this was unique in the history of our country congregations. Within a radius of five miles from my manse, I could visit the homes from which twenty-five young men went into the ministry of the Presbyterian Church.”⁶⁸⁹

Sixteen-year-old Janet stays behind in Scotsburn to finish school. Education is an important theme in J.A. and Alice's lives, and they impress its value on all their children. In April, Alice gives her daughter some advice about what to study: “If you choose a business career you should study French and German as well as shorthand & typewriting.”⁶⁹⁰ That fall, her father passes along his opinion as well: “Papa says for you to study Botany & Physics.”⁶⁹¹ Ultimately,

688 *The Rev. John A. Cairns, M.A., The Scotsburn Congregation Pictou County*. Murray, John. 1925. P. 59.

689 *The Rev. John A. Cairns, M.A., The Scotsburn Congregation Pictou County*. Murray, John. 1925. P. 59.

690 Letter. Alice Cairns to Janet Cairns. April 3, 1900.

691 Letter. Alice Cairns to Janet Cairns. November 26, 1900.

Janet will decide to go to the Normal School in Truro to become a teacher like her mother.

Ringworm, measles, and smallpox

The conditions in Barney's River are not to Alice's liking. It's a cold January and the children have ringworm, she tells Janet:

"Miss McArthur got your letter today. Perhaps you have ring-worm like John on your head. I think you had better go to the Doctor in New Glasgow...and you had better come home soon and see to your rash. You can get anything you want at Mr. Proudfoots for the egg or allspice and cinnamon and surprise soap. It has been very cold, the frost got in the cellar and our potatoes got frozen...Johns head is shorn close and he wears a hood. It may be a little better, I wish I was back in Scotsburn I am afraid Ill never get used to Barney's River."⁶⁹²

The following autumn, the children are now sick with the measles, as the Reverend writes to his daughter:

"You will be anxious to know about the children. Tom is all right again. Amy is very sick with them. Also Bobby. Bobby will not stay in bed so we have to nurse him all the time. John has been in bed sick since last Saturday but measles are not out on him yet."⁶⁹³

Janet suffers from backache and constipation at different times, and both times her parents advise the use of lemons,⁶⁹⁴ or in the latter case, Syrup of Cascara Sagrada.⁶⁹⁵ Her mother has "provoking" headaches and bronchitis.⁶⁹⁶

While these illnesses are affecting the Cairns family, one of the worst outbreaks of smallpox is occurring just down the east coast in Boston, near where Alice's brother Ben operates a pharmacy.

692 Letter. Alice Cairns to Janet Cairns. January 14, 1899.

693 Letter. J.A. Cairns to Janet Cairns. October 24, 1899.

694 Letters. Alice Cairns to Janet Cairns. December 15, 1899, and J.A. Cairns to Janet Cairns. February 17, 1899.

695 Cascara Sagrada (*Frangula purshiana*) is a shrub. The dried bark contains chemicals that are said to stimulate the bowel and have a laxative effect, however there is no good scientific evidence to support this. Still available today as a supplement. For more: <https://www.webmd.com/vitamins/ai/ingredientmono-773/cascara-sagrada>.

696 Letter. Alice Cairns to Janet Cairns. April 24, 1901.

The last smallpox outbreak

In May 1901, an outbreak of smallpox, initially unrecognized, was followed by a series of outbreaks in various neighbourhoods of Boston. From 1901 to 1903, there were 1,596 cases of smallpox, with 270 deaths, in a city with a population of approximately 560,900. The attack rate was three cases per 1,000 persons, with a case fatality rate of 17 percent. The homeless, immigrant and black communities suffered at a greater rate than did the average Bostonian.⁶⁹⁷

Vaccines were administered to stem the tide of the epidemic, as they continued to be in Canada. In the Cairns household, it was the Reverend who administered the injections, as Alice describes to Janet:

“Amy & Tom’s arms are very sore. We vaccinated John on Tuesday it is taking good. Either the vaccine was no good you were vaccinated with, or else you do not need it...

“Ida had put on an old cotton dress of mine to get vaccinated in, so she could roll up the sleeve. Papa vaccinated her, she turned quite faint...I think Ida’s arm won’t take. There was not enough vaccine put in. Amy’s & Tom’s arms took very swollen and dreadfully sore, but they do not hurt now.”⁶⁹⁸

Amy writes to her sister as well, saying, “My arm is getting better. You may receive my scab soon and then you will be able to vaccinate yourself.”⁶⁹⁹

During the three years of the epidemic, public health authorities battled those who did not believe it was ethically right to force people to take vaccines, which resulted in a landmark Supreme Court case on the constitutionality of compulsory vaccination. In *Jacobson v. Massachusetts*, a citizen challenged a state law that allowed the Cambridge Board of Health to fine him for refusing revaccination. He argued that the law flew in the face of “the inherent right of every freeman to care for his own body and health in such a way as to him seems best.” In 1905, the Court voted seven to two in favor of the state, saying that although the state couldn’t pass laws to protect an individual, it could do so to protect the public in the case of a dangerous communicable disease.

697 *The Last Smallpox Epidemic in Boston and the Vaccination Controversy, 1901-1903*. Albert, Michael, Ostheimer, Kristen G. & Breman, Joel G. In *New England Journal of Medicine*. February 1, 2001.

698 Letter. Alice Cairns to Janet Cairns. April 24, 1901.

699 Letter. Amy Cairns to Janet Cairns. Undated. Possibly included with April 24, 1901, letter from Alice.

Vaccination was the way out of the epidemic, and ultimately, it eradicated smallpox in the United States—the last case was in 1949 in Hidalgo County, Texas. In 1971, the U.S. Public Health Service formally recommended the discontinuation of routine vaccination.⁷⁰⁰

The sun rises on a new century

The first four months of 1900 find the Cairnses flat broke; the Reverend having made little for four months, Alice reports to Janet: “Papa is quite bankrupt just now, he has been paid very little since Xmas, you can only pay your board, and leave the wheel till he gets a little money...”⁷⁰¹

J.A. adds at the end of the letter: “You will have to leave the Bicycle in the Custom house till you go back as I have no money at all just now. I may have some after holidays...”⁷⁰²

It is a tough time for Alice; her anxiety and frustration are evident:

“The dreadful children have gone to bed, it is ten now I sent them an hour ago, but they are carrying on dreadfully howling and playing. Papa has not come back such a rain I think he won’t, and I am anxious about the young cow, she has been threatening to have a calf for a month. We have a lamb, and I think its mother will die soon. Papa dosed her with salts and turpentine to-day.”⁷⁰³

In November a convention has just ended, presumably of temperance activists, and one of the other preachers and J.A. had just sat down to dinner when an unwelcome and uncharitable parishioner appeared:

“...Mrs. Clunis came, so off Papa had to go while the dinner cooled to put in the old hag’s horse. She helped me wash the dishes with various remarks, ‘what lots of dishes you have’, ‘these are good heavy silver’, ‘s’pose it takes a lot to keep you’, ‘you do beat all for making pies,’ etc.”⁷⁰⁴

Economic conditions must still be fragile; Amy tells her sister in the same letter: “We had a bread and butter dinner & tea. Huh but I hate them. I feel

700 *The Last Smallpox Epidemic in Boston and the Vaccination Controversy, 1901-1903*. Albert, Michael, Ostheimer, Kristen G. & Breman, Joel G. In *New England Journal of Medicine*. February 1, 2001.

701 Letter. Alice Cairns to Janet Cairns. April 3, 1900.

702 *ibid.*

703 *ibid.*

704 Letter. Alice Cairns to Janet Cairns. November 26, 1900.

like doing anything tonight up to making mistakes writing bad & doing dishes & pecking everybody.”⁷⁰⁵

At the turn of the century the children are growing up and their eldest sister, eighteen-year-old Janet, becomes a teacher, taking on her own school in the spring of 1901. John is fourteen, and Amy is a new teenager, and experiencing all the associated drama:

“Ernie and Whiltie wrote notes to Amy asking if they might see her home after prayer meeting, she wrote back “no indeed” to both, then Ernie wrote “Do you love me,” she wrote back, “I guess not.” Ernie wrote to Maggie B. asking her if she were going to be at Prayer meeting, she snapped back aloud “None of your business,” it was fun for the rest.”⁷⁰⁶

Tom and “Bobbie,” seven and five, continue to terrify:

“Tom went off on the raft alone last week and was nearly over the dam, he alarmed the place. He is catching trout at a great rate. Bobbie too has alarmed everybody by leaning over the bridge too much. Bobbie says if I make him promise not to do many more things he cannot go out of the house.”⁷⁰⁷

Spring is the time for May baskets, cream candy, planting lilac bushes and cleaning out the school before summer break.⁷⁰⁸ But it isn’t necessarily warm. Amy reports to Janet in a May letter that along with all these other things going on, “this morning early there was at least an inch of snow on the ground.”⁷⁰⁹

J.A. is making badges with ribbons for the Temperance meetings and building a fence to keep the wandering sheep out of Alice’s vegetable garden. Johnny Irvine’s wedding finally happens—they had to wait a fortnight but “there was typhoid fever where her dress was being made, and it could not be made & she could not get the dress from the place in time.” Friends and neighbours share whatever they have, in one day of visiting, Alice is given a large cake of maple sugar, two-and-a-half pounds of butter, a “beautiful white knitted petticoat” and a jar of strawberries. The maple sugar is a gift from “the Sutherland man who

705 *ibid.*

706 *ibid.*

707 *ibid.*

708 Letter. Amy Cairns to Janet Cairns. May 1, 1901.

709 *ibid.*

lost his wife and baby, he keeps house with just his little boy.”⁷¹⁰ Another friend delivers two duck eggs for John. Alice writes, “I set the two duck eggs to-night, when they are hatched you will only have 3 weeks more at the Normal.”⁷¹¹

Janet comes home for the summer, which is at least one of the children’s favorite times because of it. Alice writes Janet in May, saying: “I asked Tom & Bob if they were not glad summer had come, Tom said Not just because its summertime, but because Janet comes home in summer...”⁷¹²

A trip home for Alice

In September, and apparently despite the smallpox epidemic there, Alice travels to Boston to visit her brother Ben, and the rest of the family. Janet will come home from Scotsburn to stay with the children. Before they go, however, they have a wonderful seashore day on September 7:

“We were down at the shore Saturday all day, 27 of us. I baked a large white cake frosted, ginger cookies, sugar cookies and two apple pies last week, the frosted cake is yet uncut, we took the cookies to the shore, and 13 eggs and 2 two-quart jars of milk, a loaf of bread and pat of butter, left the pies for Sunday dinner. We had a glorious time, the boys were in bathing about ten times in the 7 hours we spent there.”⁷¹³

Alice leaves on her trip on Friday, September 20. She stops first for a lengthy stay in Digby with her mother Amy, her sister May, and the rest of the family. She writes an undated letter to Janet at some point after, near to Christmas:

“Please put Grandma’s Xmas presents in their stockings, that bug will flutter its wings if you give it a little push, and travel at a great rate when wound up...I wore my best waist to-day, it fits beautifully. I look a little more than one of the upper middle class with it on...I start for Boston on Wednesday, Grandma on Thursday. I find I have just no time for anything. Grandma put in two more lawn handkerchiefs with knot edge, for you and Amy to take a pattern of and keep...I begin to want to hear the news. I am enjoying each single moment. I feel some slight

710 Letter. Alice Cairns to Janet Cairns. May 1 & May 11, 1901.

711 *ibid.*

712 Letter. Alice Cairns to Janet Cairns. May 1, 1901.

713 Letter. Alice Cairns to Janet Cairns. September 10, 1901.

punctures of conscience on your account, but do not kill yourself and be good to John & Bob.”⁷¹⁴

Alice is still in Massachusetts for the holidays, and travels from Roxbury to Boston for Christmas Day. She has posted the Christmas box of gifts too late:

“I was so sorry, for I wanted you to get it in time for Santa Claus, and wrote a request on it to Sadie not to deliver it till you sent or called for it, so you could put things in stockings. I wore my new waist to-day up at May’s, they thought it so pretty. Aunt May especially admired your velvet collar with the lace stock on. Charlotte is quite good looking. Bernard is not much of anything, subdued. I am having a lovely, lovely, lovely time. Aunt May brought Papa 6 handkerchiefs, 12 for me, gloves for you & Amy, necktie for John, books for Tom & Bob. . .

“Grandma is making me a bonnet, she has sold more than \$30 worth of fancy work this summer.⁷¹⁵ You are to take your choice of the gloves but you can give Amy the ribbons off the handkerchiefs if you do not want them. . . It is so nice to see old friends again. My foot is better. Put lemons and some molasses and sugar in the mincemeat. May has a dogskin coat. My address will be after this 44 Evergreen St. Roxbury Mass. . . Xmas day. I am just going to the train for Yarmouth with Grandma’s bonnet on.”⁷¹⁶

Ladies & fancy work

While half of a ladies’ sewing time might be taken up with “plain” sewing (repairing clothes, hemming, attaching buttons, etc.) the remainder could be made up of “fancy work,” such as embroidery, crocheting, or knitting. This work could be more than just an entertainment for ladies in the evening; it could also be profitable for the accurate and speedy needleworker. As an 1873 issue of *Harper’s Bazaar* wrote:

“We have met with cases where the frivolity of fancy-work has been turned to excellent profit, where young ladies who had learned its arts in

714 Letter. Alice Cairns to Janet Cairns. Undated, 1901.

715 “Fancy work” refers to embroidery of household items and clothing popular in the Victorian era and well into the 1900s.

716 Letter. Alice Cairns to Janet Cairns. Undated, 1901. Around Christmas.

their idle moments practiced it to provide themselves with the wardrobe that their restricted purses could never buy...we have known of a still more striking case where a widow has paid off the mortgage on her city house, and supported herself and child for many years, almost altogether with her swift crochet needle.”⁷¹⁷

We know that Amy was one of those who did fancy work and sold it, appearing to do quite well. She even has someone who makes her patterns for her. Amy would write to her granddaughter Janet the next spring, detailing what appears to be a thriving business to folks in Digby and Boston:

“...about the pattern for lace edged handkerchief I have just one and that has one partly done on it...I will send it for your own just as soon as it is free. “Floss” will draw it as she has lots of the right kind of transparent paper and she always does a good deal of drawing for me. I have made four handkerchiefs after the pattern and sold three for \$2.50 apiece. I forget whether I showed your Mother a centre piece that I had at Mrs. Morse’s in Digby, well I left it there and it sold this winter for \$2.50—also 4 collars for 50 cents apiece. I have 15 of those turnovers worked with silk, for sale, to supply Boston customers, am busy now making sun bonnets will put



Amy (Dakin) Waters in her sitting room in Digby, Nova Scotia, doing “fancy work.” Late 1890s.

⁷¹⁷ *Victorian Sewing: A Brief History of Plain and Fancy Work*. Matthew, Mimi. June 23, 2016. Found 6/4/22 at <https://www.mimimatthews.com/2016/06/23/victorian-sewing-a-brief-history-of-plain-and-fancy-work/>.

6 in the women's exchange in Digby—to sell for 25 cents apiece and the whole of them together only cost me 18 cents—cotton 3 cents a yard and they are very pretty, ruffle around the edge & corded, high crown & c.c. sample of one enclosed.”⁷¹⁸

A few days before Christmas, Alice writes from Digby to “Dear homebodies,” a variety of notes about her trip, as well as directions for the gifts: “The book was Bob’s, and the nuts for Amy & Bob. Do be good to Bob, and let him have sugar for his porridge, do not scold or be cross to him...”⁷¹⁹

Time to come home

Though Alice is ready to come home after her journey, she is not homesick, and has clearly had a wonderful time. She writes two letters her last week in Wareham, both of which contain numerous details about her brother Ben and his family:

“I was so glad to see Ben again. It repays me for every twinge of regret about leaving home to worry Janet. The twins⁷²⁰ have remarkable dark blue eyes, they each have a good sled, but no snow to speak of, and less hills to ride down, about as much hill as from our front door to the big gate, they think that quite a hill! Ben does not keep a horse or cow only a few hens.”⁷²¹

The last letter, to Janet, expresses Alice’s great satisfaction at having taken her trip, even given the expense:

“Everything is so nice here, it is quite worth the trouble and expense of coming, Ben & Maude are so very nice and kind, and the children are sweet.

“Jan. 10th We went to New Bedford yesterday 20 miles on the electric—one cent a mile. Had I known I might have come here from Boston that way, and saved a lot. We are to go to the bogs⁷²² this afternoon if it does

718 Letter. Amy (Dakin) Waters to granddaughter Janet Cairns. March 25, 1902.

719 Letter. Alice Cairns to family. December 21, 1901.

720 Ben’s twin girls, Elsie & Edith.

721 Letter. Alice Cairns to family. January 8, 1902.

722 Wareham was just becoming famous through the late 1870s for its cranberry bogs, one of the earliest of which was constructed in 1860. By 1900 when the United Cranberry Company was formed, there were thirty-seven growers listed in the town directory, and that number continued to grow. A.D. Makepeace in Wareham became the world’s largest cranberry growers and one of the founders of Ocean Spray. For more: <https://admakepeace.com/cranberries/>.



Ben and the ten-year-old twins by their holiday home in Digby, Nova Scotia in 1902, and the twins eight years later at age eighteen in 1910. Elsie is seated and Edith is standing.

not rain. Elsie and Edith are sending Tom & Bob and the puss a present to be given Bob when Tom's birthday comes...

"Perhaps if nothing happens I will have been home a day next Friday. I am not actually homesick, but I shall be glad to get home. We had nice oyster stew for tea and breakfast...Maud has delicious grape jelly made of wild grapes...Edith & Elsie have the same craving for lead pencils that our children have. Elsie got a sharpener yesterday. I think I won't write anymore letters home..."⁷²³

Alice leaves on Tuesday, January 14 and plans to arrive on the sixteenth on the first train from Truro.

Though she doesn't know it yet, Alice will soon learn that her remaining days in Barney's River will, thankfully, be numbered as her husband will be called to a new assignment that will take the family nearly 4,000 kilometers away from the Maritime culture and geography that has been their life.

723 Letter. Alice Cairns to Janet Cairns. January 14, 1902.

Chapter 30

The British Cousins

AS THE CENTURY DRAWS TO A CLOSE ACROSS THE OCEAN, the English Waters cousins have grown up. As we know, Thomas and Ben's eldest sister Elizabeth had lost her husband, the Rev. Thomas Pyne, in 1873. At that time, she was left to raise their five children.



Beverley Minster church, where Reggie is curate in 1899. An unknown woman in the picture is likely one of Reggie's sisters.



In front of the Barney's River manse. The Reverend sits in the front seat of the democrat with visiting cousin, Julia Pyne. In the back seat are the sisters Mary Gilpin and Alice Cairns. Amy Cairns stands next to them.

Reggie is ordained in 1891 and becomes curate of Beverley Minster in 1899 and later Rector at St. Cuthbert's Church in York. Percy marries twice, once in 1891 to Lettice McEwan and a second time to Jessie Kellie.⁷²⁴ Julia remains single, living in York, and taking at least one trip when she goes to stay with her cousin Alice Cairns in Nova Scotia. Rosa and Agnes will also remain unmarried. Sheila Turvey wrote, "Agnes...had spent holidays as a young woman in Italy with her aunts Jane and Nancy and later became very interested in family history."⁷²⁵ Agnes also will become the fiery lady who comes to her cousins' financial rescue later in life. None of the Pyne family will have children and so the Pyne connection will end with this generation.⁷²⁶

Ben & Barbara's brood

Ben and Barbara's four children Thomas, May, Amy, and Edith have also grown up. Though we know quite a lot about the three girls, Thomas' life is mostly a mystery, and some of what is known is made up of conflicting accounts.

⁷²⁴ "Kellie" may also have been spelled "Kelly."

⁷²⁵ *The Waters Family. Volume IV.* Turvey, Sheila. P. 20

⁷²⁶ Reggie dies on February 10, 1934. Percy dies on January 21, 1946. Julia dies on November 14, 1950. Rosa dies in 1954. Agnes dies in 1956.

We know that he attends school in Scarborough and becomes a provisions dealer, at least for some time working in his father Ben's store. His nephew John Turvey remembers his Uncle Tom, Grandfather Benjamin, and their store:

“Then there was my Grandfather—Benjamin Waters—who eventually retired into our care from a failing Grocery & Provision shop in Monk Street, Birkenhead, run also by his son Thomas. I was not infrequently sent on errands to this shop & can remember my Grandfather peering out from the accountant desk & my uncle Thomas in a white apron behind the counter weighing up packets of tea & keeping a sharp eye on the open barrel of apples on my side of the divide.”

“There were also some twisty rat-riddled stairs leading down to a vast cellar the floor of which was studded with sacks of currants, sultanas, & nuts to which I occasionally helped myself with a feeling of enormous guilt.”⁷²⁷

Thomas is described as a “rather depressing little man occupied with a few hens in the backyard.” As trouble approaches his father Ben's business, however, he will try to talk him into moving the shop. One writer says, “Perhaps if his father had taken notice his business would not have gone broke.”⁷²⁸



Thomas Waters, son of Benjamin Waters. 1900s.

727 Family History. Turvey, John. April 25, 1973. P. 1-2.

728 We will soon learn more about this story.

Thomas marries in turn two sisters, Nellie and Maggie Smith. He has no children, and his date of death remains unknown. The last known correspondence from him was in 1925.⁷²⁹

The three sisters will figure more prominently into the family's future generations, each in her own way. Sheila Turvey writes about the girls' childhood:

“Edith and her sisters grew up above their father's big corner shop in Birkenhead. They went away to a boarding school run by a Quaker in nearby Southport and loved it. There they made many friends, with whom they kept in touch for the rest of their lives. The girls received some sort of pupil-teacher training, which came in useful when they later needed to earn a living.”⁷³⁰



Edith (left) & May Waters (right). Unfortunately, there is no image of their sister, Amy, from this photo session. Early 1880s.

729 Letter. Tom Waters to his nephews Brian & Geoff Hewson. December 7, 1925.

730 *The Waters Family, Volume IV*. Turvey, Sheila. P. 17-18.

May eventually runs a private school with her sister Edith and never marries. She spends years transcribing letters and diaries and drawing up family trees, and we owe her a great debt for the knowledge we have today of the Waters history.⁷³¹ As we now know, she also destroys some records at her discretion. In later decades, we will hear much more from May as she and various family members carry on a significant amount of correspondence throughout their lives.

The Waters join the Turveys

In 1888, at age twenty, Edith meets John Hilton Turvey, ten years her senior, who goes by “Hilton,” at a party in West Kirby she attends with her two sisters. As Sheila Turvey describes, it was a life-changing night for them both:

“He decided Edith was the prettiest and they were soon engaged. Soon engaged, but long engaged! It was eight years before they he had reached a position, as manager of a hosiery shop, which warranted taking on the responsibilities of a family.”⁷³²

Hilton and Edith marry on April 23, 1896, at Holy Trinity Church, Hoylake, Wirral. The wedding is described by a local newspaper:

“The ceremony was performed by the Rev. W. Webster, M.A., curate of All Saints’, Liverpool, assisted by the Rev. R.G. Pyne, M.A., cousin of the bride. The service was largely attended, and a large crowd also lined the footwalk from the church porch to the outer gate. The bride, who was given away by her brother, Mr. Tom Waters, in the unavoidable absence of her father, was attired in a gown of pale grey cloth, trimmed with white silk and silver passementerie.⁷³³ She wore a large white chip hat, trimmed with bows of white ribbon, tulle, and sprays of white lilac; and carried a magnificent shower bouquet of white roses and lilies of the valley. The bridesmaids were Miss Amaret Waters, sister of the bride, and Miss Edith Turvey, sister of the bridegroom. The best man was Mr. Harry Turvey, the

731 Letter. Tom Waters to Brian & Geoff Hewson. December 7, 1925.

732 *Turvey: Faith and Persistence*. Turvey, Sheila. P. 37.

733 Elaborate ornamental edging or trimming (such as tassels) made of braid, cord, gimp, beading, or metallic thread. “Passement” is an early French word for lace. Merriam-Webster online dictionary. Found 5/29/22 at <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/passementerie>.

groom's brother. During the afternoon a reception was held at "Genova,"⁷³⁴ when some eighty guests were presented.

"Later in the day the happy couple left for the honeymoon tour, which is to be spent in the English Lakes districts. There were over one hundred presents, and many of them were of a very handsome description."⁷³⁵

Near the end of the decade, Ben's daughter Edith and Hilton Turvey have two boys, eighteen-month-old Norman and newborn John,⁷³⁶ when Edith is suddenly left a widow on May 29, 1898. Hilton dies from inflammation of the appendix, likely a fatal infection from a bicycle accident the week before, where the handlebars had pierced his abdomen.⁷³⁷

Towards a new decade, and more loss

Benjamin and Barbara's grocery business prospered through the 1870s and '80s.⁷³⁸ However, the decade leading up to the new century mark would see the fall of the business, and the generational tide beginning to turn in the Waters family.

Progress eventually thwarts Ben's grocery business in the 1890s when a man called Lipton revolutionized the British grocery trade, introducing multiple stores with centralized bulk buying that allowed him to cut his prices, as John Burnett wrote: "By 1914, he [Lipton] had an immense trade carried on in 500 shops, but also a score of imitators whose multiple stores now dominated the retail trade."⁷³⁹

One of these shops is the Maypole, which opens a branch opposite Ben's shop around 1898, significantly undercutting Ben's prices. Also, the Mersey tunnel is constructed between Birkenhead and Liverpool, and "his business went sharply downhill as people took to shopping in the cheaper and more modern shops in Liverpool."⁷⁴⁰ Then, Barbara dies in 1900—his grief and her loss likely contributing even more to the disintegration of the business:

734 "Genova" is earlier described as the home of Ben and Barbara.

735 Unidentified newspaper clipping.

736 John would most often be called "Jack" later in life.

737 *Turvey: Faith and Persistence*. Turvey, Sheila. P.38.

738 *ibid.* P. 16.

739 *A History of the Cost of Living*. Burnett, John. Penguin. 1969. P.213-4.

740 *The Waters Family, Volume IV*. Turvey, Sheila. P. 16.



A stern-looking Barbara (Bake) Waters (left) and her gentle husband, Benjamin Waters (right). 1890s.

“While the thrifty shoppers abandoned Ben for the multiple stores, the wealthier people who had patronized his shop moved out to the new suburbs and Ben’s son tried to persuade him to follow them with his shop. But Ben could not contemplate such a step; never a decisive man, he was now over seventy, and Barbara, his strong support, died in 1900. The business collapsed, and Ben retired to be cared for by his daughters at 33 Grange Mount. Ben was remembered as a gentle old man.”⁷⁴¹

The losses of the business, their mother Barbara, and Hilton Turvey created an enormous emotional and economic challenge for the family. Fortunately, all three sisters had become teachers, a profession that could produce reliable sustenance:

“The consequences of his [Hilton Turvey’s] early death were naturally tragic for the widow. His Will...was worth less than £800...”⁷⁴²

⁷⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁷⁴² *Turvey: Faith & Persistence*. Turvey, Sheila. P.38.



A young Amaret "Amy" Waters. Undated. 1890s.

“Both Edith Turvey and her unmarried sister May were apprentice teachers, they opened a kindergarten in Birkenhead to earn a living.”⁷⁴³

Sister Amy, also a teacher, is about to meet her future husband, joining the Waters with yet another family from which today's Hewsons all descend.

⁷⁴³ *ibid.* P. 43.

Chapter 31

A New Line Begins

AMY WATERS' FUTURE HUSBAND would have two significant things in common with her grandfather: he is, like Thomas Waters Sr., an illegitimate child, and a mariner.

Frank Hewson is born in 1865.⁷⁴⁴ By the late 1850s, Frank's father, Dr. John Hewson (b. June 26, 1799), who has been married to Elizabeth for thirty years, engages in a long-term but unmarried relationship with Charlotte Furniss, originally from Nottingham. She is thirty years his junior. They will have five children together and this illicit but prolific relationship provides the next line of the family tree: Frank Hewson.

When John Hewson is thirty-one, an infant named Charlotte Furniss is baptized on November 28, 1830 at Kneesall in Nottinghamshire. Her parents are George and Sarah.⁷⁴⁵ In the 1841 census she is eleven and living in Kneesall with her parents. Her father George is a fifty-five-year-old agricultural labourer. She has three brothers.⁷⁴⁶ In 1851, at age twenty-one, Charlotte is working as a servant for the vicar of Ashby cum Fenby, a small village in Lincolnshire.⁷⁴⁷

744 *Furniss and Hewson Report*. Family History Diggers. February 8, 2021. Everything we know about Frank Hewson's ancestry was obtained through the work of Family History Diggers, though throughout this material the original sources are quoted.

745 *Baptisms (PR) England*. Kneesall, Nottinghamshire. November 28, 1830. FURNISS, Charlotte. Collection: England, Select Births and Christenings, 1538-1975. Found 2/2/21 at www.ancestry.co.uk.

746 *Census records England*. Kneesall, Nottinghamshire. June 6, 1841. FURNISS, George. Class: H0107; Piece: 866; Book: 3; Enumeration District: 17; Folio: 9; Page: 12; Line: 24; GSU roll: 438909. Found 2/2/21 at www.ancestry.co.uk.

747 *Census records England*. Ashby cum Fenby, Lincolnshire. 30 March 1851. GARREY, James [Head]. Class: H0107; Piece: 2113; Folio: 363; Page: 16; GSU roll: 87742. Found 2/2/21 at www.ancestry.co.uk.



A painting of Dr. John Hewson held in the Lincolnshire Archives.
Courtesy Lincolnshire Archives.

But things change for Charlotte at some point in her early thirties. By 1861, she is thirty-one years old and living at 22 Norman Street in metropolitan Lincoln, more than thirty miles from the village. She lists herself on the census as a dressmaker. She has a two-year-old ‘nephew’ living with her called Frederick. This is most likely her first son with John Hewson, John Frederick, born April 8, 1859.⁷⁴⁸ Over the next few years, she would bear four more of John’s children—Edward (b. May 16, 1860), Alice Charlotte (b. July 19, 1861), Helen, nicknamed Nellie (b. May 13, 1864), and Frank (b. October 6, 1865). They will move into a home at 5 Carholme Road in Lincoln that John provides for them.

Registrar's District <i>Lincoln</i>										
1865. BIRTHS in the District of <i>Lincoln</i> in the County of <i>Lincoln</i>										
No.	When Born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and Surname of Father	Name and Maiden Surname of Mother	Rank or Profession of Father	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant	When Registered	Signature of Registrar	Exceptional Name if added after Registration of Birth
<i>840</i>	<i>6th October 1865</i>	<i>Frank Reg</i>			<i>Charlotte</i> <i>Turner</i>		<i>G. Turner</i> <i>Mother</i> <i>22 Norman Street</i> <i>Lincoln</i>	<i>6th October</i> <i>1865</i>	<i>Henry</i> <i>Hobbes</i> <i>Registrar</i>	

Frank Hewson's birth certificate from October 6, 1865.

748 *Census records England*. Lincoln, Lincolnshire. April 3, 1861. FURNISS, Charlotte. Class: RG 9; Piece: 2359; Folio: 34; Page: 19; GSU roll: 542959. Found 2/2/21 at www.ancestry.co.uk.

On September 29, 1864, a year before Frank is born, his father John makes a will with a lawyer friend, John William Danby, that provides for Charlotte and the four children existing at that time. It turns out to be fortuitous for Charlotte and the children that he does so, because less than three years later he will be suddenly taken from them.

Death of the doctor

On February 2, 1867, when Frank is only a toddler, Dr. Hewson develops blood poisoning after performing surgery without protective gloves (as was common then) and dies. John had not updated the will to include his youngest son, therefore Frank is unnamed in the will, which could have been disastrous for him.

The will is read within six hours of John’s death and John’s wife Elizabeth is displeased by its contents. Elizabeth contests the will with the claim that John was not of sound mind when he made his will.

However, on September 5, the judge in the case finds no basis to this and rules against Elizabeth, having pronounced on July 24 “for the force and validity of the said Will.”⁷⁴⁹ Elizabeth then gives up her claim, and even admits that she was mostly upset because of John’s relationship with Charlotte.

Charlotte marries

Only eight months after John’s death, and only weeks after the judge’s decision that allows Charlotte to inherit the house she lives in and a trust fund to support the children, she marries Robert Pepperdine on September 26, 1867.

Page 127.

1867. Marriage solemnized at St. Mary's, Wifford Church, in the Parish of St. Mary's, Wifford, in the County of Lincoln

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
253	September 26 th	Robert Pepperdine	Full	Bachelor	Coiner	Norman Street	Robert Pepperdine	Farmer
		Charlotte Furniss	Full	Spinster	- - -	Norman Street	George Furniss	Farmer

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church by Licence by me, J. Thorold, Vicar

This Marriage was solemnized between us, Robert Pepperdine and Charlotte Furniss in the Presence of us, Richard Pepperdine and Richard Payne

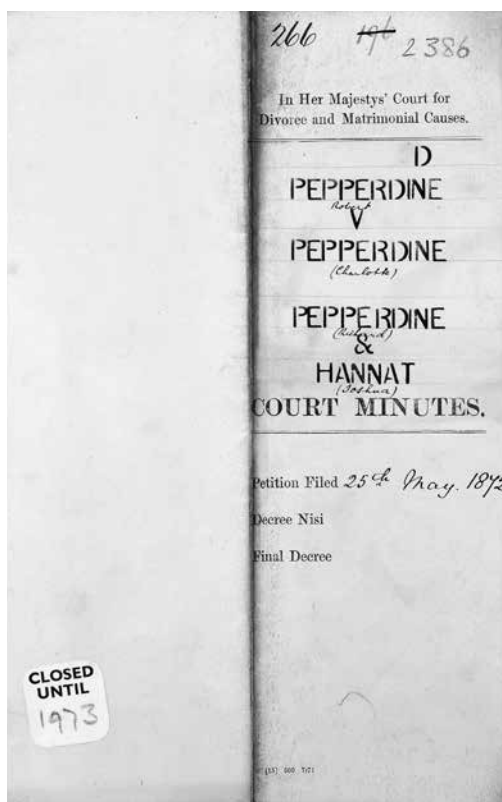
Marriage register entry for the wedding of Robert Pepperdine and Charlotte Furniss.

749 Last Will & Testament of John Hewson.

This is not likely surprising for the times, as an unmarried woman with bastard children, especially with a married man, would very likely be concerned for her financial future.

Robert and Charlotte have one child together, a son called Robert born in the spring of 1868.⁷⁵⁰

In 1872, Charlotte is not working and is in receipt of the annuity set up by John Hewson in his will. The five children that she had with him are living with her, but her second husband and son Robert are not.⁷⁵¹ Apparently this is because there are problems in the marriage, as is evidenced by divorce proceedings Robert initiates against Charlotte on the grounds of adultery.



The papers from the contentious divorce of Robert Pepperdine and Charlotte Furniss.

750 *Births (CR) England*. Lincoln Registration District. 1st Quarter 1868. PEPPERDINE, Robert. Vol 7a Page 502. Found 2/4/21 at www.ancestry.co.uk.

751 *Census records England*. Lincoln, Lincolnshire. April 2, 1871. PEPPERDINE, Charlotte. Class: RG10; Piece: 3371; Folio: 11; Page: 16; GSU roll: 839364. Found 2/2/21 at www.ancestry.co.uk.

On May 25, 1872, a divorce petition has been filed⁷⁵² and correspondence between them is hostile and nasty. He alleges her adultery with his brother in their home in Lincoln, and with a Joshua Hannat in a hotel in London. She in turn accuses him of long-term adultery and desertion.⁷⁵³

Recent research has uncovered that the Joshua Hannat that Charlotte met in a hotel in London was unlikely to have been for an adulterous affair as he may have been the stepson of her brother George, who had emigrated to America.⁷⁵⁴ George had married an Elizabeth Hannant⁷⁵⁵ shortly after emigrating, and she had an illegitimate son called Joshua whom George adopted. It is possible that the meeting in the hotel may have just been an aunt and nephew spending time together.

752 Divorce records. May 25, 1872. Pepperdine v Pepperdine. Ref: J 77/124/2386. National Archives, Kew, England. Collection: England & Wales, Civil Divorce Records, 1858-1918. Found 2/4/21 at www.ancestry.co.uk.

753 *ibid.*

754 *Report: Furniss & Hewson*. Family History Diggers. February 8, 2021. P. 10.

755 The report indicates that while Joshua's name is spelled "Hannat," the divorce papers spell Elizabeth's name "Hannant."

Chapter 32

A Family Orphaned

FIVE YEARS AFTER JOHN HEWSON'S DEATH, on July 7, 1872, Charlotte dies in her thirties. The cause of death is listed as “inflammation of the lungs.”⁷⁵⁶ She is buried in Canwick cemetery in Lincoln on July 10.⁷⁵⁷

Charlotte leaves behind an unfinalized divorce and her five children, now orphans aged thirteen, twelve, ten, eight and six. The children are put in the care of Mrs. Frances Hughes, who corresponds with John Danby, the executor of John Hewson's estate. Together they will provide stability and structure for the children until their adulthood.

Danby provides the funds to provide for the children's expenses, but it's a tough life. Frank receives an education with his two sisters Alice and Helen (Nellie), first attending Mrs. Hughes own school at 31 Hamilton Square in Birkenhead, very near where Amy Waters is being raised. Frank will leave the school in 1880, but Alice and Nellie will remain at the school until its closure in 1885. His sisters will later attend other schools, his sister Alice even going to finishing school possibly in Paris or Brussels.

Despite their parentless status, they seem to adjust well. In 1877, Mrs. Hughes' sister Emma Edman visits the children and writes to Mr. Danby: “If I speak of all with brevity, I can say truthfully they seem good i.e. intentionally so—bright with intelligence and good common sense—also quite happy.”⁷⁵⁸

756 As registered by a Lucy Wiswouled, who was present.

757 Burials (CR) England. Canwick, Lincoln, Lincolnshire. July 10, 1872. PEPPERDINE, Charlotte. Collection: Lincolnshire Burials. Found 2/4/21 at www.findmypast.co.uk.

758 Letter. Emma Edman to Mr. Danby. July 19, 1877. Ref: 4 DEG 3 14 2 30. Lincolnshire Archives, Lincoln.

Tragedy befalls older brothers

John Frederick drowns at age fourteen in the River Foss on July 2, 1873. There is an inquest, but no known record of it survives to shed more light on the circumstances. His death is registered with the surname of Furniss.⁷⁵⁹

In 1875, the eldest, sixteen-year-old Edward is a troublesome lad. This doesn't seem so surprising, considering he lost his father when he was eight and his mother at thirteen.

The letters from Mrs. Hughes to Mr. Danby show that the months Edward was in England were difficult. As Mrs. Hughes writes, "he grumbles at anything else he is given to study."⁷⁶⁰ He goes to sea, then returns and is living with the other children at Mrs. Hughes' in the spring of 1875. He isn't sure about going back to sea—he is also considering farming. Regardless, Mrs. Hughes and Mr. Danby work to try and find him a new place at sea. However, there seems to be some controversy over his previous voyage, his Captain writing that he would not accept him on board one of his ships again, describing him as a "bad young seaman."⁷⁶¹

Finally, Edward is bound to the Merchant Trading Company of Liverpool on January 9, 1875, and registers on June 9 for an indenture period of five years.⁷⁶² In September, Edward is apprenticed on *S.S. Malta*, a 2.24-ton Cunard steamer, which is heading to India. He arrives in Calcutta but dies there of cholera⁷⁶³ on December 29, 1876.⁷⁶⁴

Meanwhile, Frank has a few of his own behavioural issues as a young man. On August 10, 1876, Mrs. Hughes writes one of her regular updates on the children in which she bemoans Frank's manners "uncouth as ever I almost despair of seeing him refined and gentlemanly."⁷⁶⁵ Later in the year he appears to have settled down a bit: "Frank learns very well, his manners are rather boisterous, but he is a good boy and particularly kind and attentive to me."⁷⁶⁶

Frank is also interested in going to sea like his big brother Edward, but Mrs. Hughes and Mr. Danby are anxious that he does not go before the age of fifteen.

759 Deaths (CR) England. Lincoln Registration District, Lincolnshire. Q3 1873. FURNISS, John Frederick. Vol 7a P. 293. Found 6/28/21 at www.ancestry.co.uk.

760 Letter. Mrs. Hughes to Mr. Danby. July 7, 1875. Ref: 4 DEG 3 14 2 30. Lincolnshire Archives, Lincoln.

761 Letter. Captain Causebrook to Mr. Danby. May 7, 1875. Ref: 4 DEG 3 14 2 30. Lincolnshire Archives, Lincoln.

762 *Register of Apprentices*. Ship's Record.

763 This was during the fourth of seven cholera pandemics in the past 200 years. When fatal, death from cholera was painful and terrible. For more: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cholera_outbreaks_and_pandemics.

764 Burials (PR) India. Chowringhee, Bengal. February 29, 1876. Hewson, Edward. Parish register transcripts from the Presidency of Bengal: 1713-1948. British Library Ref N-1-155. Collection: British India Office Deaths & Burials. Found 6/28/21 at www.findmypast.co.uk.

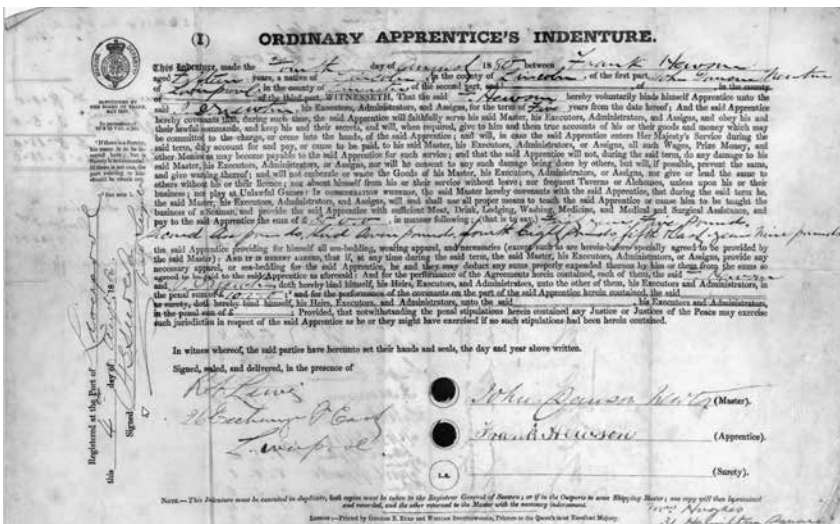
765 Letter. Mrs. Hughes to Mr. Danby. August 10, 1876. Ref: 4 DEG 3 14 2 30. Lincolnshire Archives, Lincoln.

766 *ibid*.

Chapter 33

Frank Sets Sail

IN THE SPRING OF 1880, when Frank is fifteen, he goes to sea as an indentured cabin boy. Indenture was essentially forced labor, and young men were “owned” by the person who “bound” them—in Frank’s case, a man named J.D. Newton. Frank registers at Liverpool on April 4, 1880, for a five-year term, for which he will be paid a total of £35: £5 the first year; £6 the second, £7 the third, £8 the fourth, and £9 the fifth.⁷⁶⁷



Frank Hewson's Indenture Papers, outlining his obligations and his pay for a five-year term.

767 Apprentice Indenture. Liverpool. 4 August 1880. HEWSON, Frank. Collection: Registry of Shipping and Seamen: Index of Apprentices; Class: BT 150; Piece Number: 47. www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 June 2021.

On August 7, Frank sails “in high spirits” and his sisters are also in high spirits seeing him off.⁷⁶⁸ He is aboard the 1,099-ton ship *Patterdale* bound for San Francisco.

A log of voyages

While we don't have letters from Frank during his thirteen years at sea, we do have a wonderful untitled document that he wrote during “any spare moment” he had, presumably at sea, describing his voyages from 1880 to 1894. The document isn't dated, but we know it was written after 1894.

1st Voyage

Left Liverpool Aug⁷ 1880
in Ship "Patterdale" of L'pool
1099 Tons reg. bound for
San Francisco arriving
there in December 1880
after a passage of 120
days with a general cargo
we had very bad weather
off Cape Horn & also
on reaching San Francisco
two days before reaching
port whilst shortning sail
at midnight H. Buck
apprentice missed his
hold whilst aloft & fell
overboard as he fell he
also knocked H. Whitney
another apprentice out

A page from the handwritten log of Frank's first voyage.

It was addressed to one Amy Waters, The King's Gap, Hoylake, who would become Frank's wife in 1899. Because it was addressed to her, perhaps Frank wrote it at her request. If so, she may have asked for it for her own knowledge, or for documentation of family history.

Whatever the reason, we're grateful for it today, as it fills in many of the details of Frank's life. The document is part letter, part log, and shows Frank to be as colorful and observant a writer as were the two Thomas Waters.

Fear is a teacher

The fifteen-year-old cabin boy was to experience the dangers of the sea on his first voyage. After 120 days at sea, Patterdale was nearing its destination in early December 1880. The crew had experienced very bad weather off Cape Horn two days before making port at San Francisco. It was there that tragedy struck, and it would be the teenager's first experience with death at sea, with how quickly and easily it could happen:

“...two days before reaching port, whilst shortening sail at midnight, H. Buck, apprentice, missed his hold whilst aloft & fell overboard. As he fell, he also knocked H. Whitney, another apprentice, out of the rigging, but he fortunately fell on deck breaking his legs & getting severely shaken. Buck lived at Temple Road B'head & Whitney was from Sale close to Manchester.”⁷⁶⁹

The crew spent December and part of January in San Francisco, then were bound for Queenstown⁷⁷⁰ with a full cargo of wheat before returning to Liverpool in April 1881. He would have nearly three months' stay at home before sailing in *Patterdale* again in June 1881.

On his second voyage, again to San Francisco, Frank witnesses a mass desertion, and deals with a “daft” passenger:

“After a stay of four weeks, started on our homeward passage with a full cargo of flour bound for Liverpool direct. This voyage we had very bad officers particularly the 2nd [Mate, presumably]. As soon as the ship

⁷⁶⁹ Voyage #2. *Frank Hewson Voyages*. P. 2-3.

⁷⁷⁰ Queenstown (now called Cobh), is a seaport town on the south coast of County Cork, Ireland. Found 8/24/21 at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cobh#:~:text=Cobh%20\(%2F%CB%88ko%CA%8Av,Ireland's%20only%20dedicated%20cruise%20terminals..](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cobh#:~:text=Cobh%20(%2F%CB%88ko%CA%8Av,Ireland's%20only%20dedicated%20cruise%20terminals..)



Frank Hewson's first voyage to San Francisco was on *Patterdale*, shown here tied up along the San Francisco waterfront. This image is from about 1880 and may be an actual image from the time he was there. North Point Warehouse, on SW corner of Sansome and Lombard, in background. Courtesy OpenSFHistory/wnp71.2322. Reprinted with permission.

arrived at S.F. all the sailors 4 of the apprentices & 3rd Mate ran away on account of things being so unpleasant on board. The 2nd was a man about 35 years of age & a very disagreeable customer. Also he was one of three men who would never rise any higher in his profession on account of as soon as he got ashore did nothing but drink until his money was all spent could never keep enough for his examination fee etc.

“We left our passenger at Frisco he was such a rum johnnie did nothing but try & stuff us boys up with how much money his parents had & all the Lords & Dukes he knew etc. You may be sure we used to torment the life out of him...we heard afterwards he had got into some trouble at England so had to clear out of the way but he was as mad as a hatter at times. He often used to complain to the Captain about us boys & mind he was between 30 & 40 years of age...”⁷⁷¹

Frank's third voyage, a year-long voyage on *Eskdale* to Adelaide, Australia, San Francisco and Portland Oregon involves an infamous Cape Horn storm that nearly sinks the ship. Though he survives, others do not:

771 Voyage #2. *Frank Hewson Voyages*. P. 3-5.

“We were 14 days at Adelaide [Australia] then sailed in ballast⁷⁷² for San Francisco, arriving there in November 1882. Got orders there to proceed to Portland, Oregon, to load. It is 500⁷⁷³ North of San Francisco—arrived there a few days later. Whilst there our Captain got married to an American lady who came home on the ship with us. This port is a great place for fruit. We used to take the ship’s boat up river. It is a long fresh water one—and the farmers used to let us fill her with apples for nothing—in fact they are so plentiful there they even feed the pigs with them.

“We left there in January 1883—nothing of importance happening until we got near Cape Horn. We then met with very bad weather. On the 6th of March we got into a terrific gale of wind and nearly lost the ship and all our lives. For some days previous to that the weather had been very bad but at midnight on the 6th we ran into the worst night of all—everybody had been on deck. We had to shorten sail and continually repair things that kept getting broken and washed away.

“About 10AM next day, we had been sent to get something to eat, when the ship suddenly broached to—that is coming right up into the trough of the sea and she washed away everything about her decks even the men’s bunks. The Captain was on deck and had his head split open and was insensible for 36 hours afterwards and would have gone overboard only he happened to be lashed to the rigging. The man steering had both his legs and thighs broken. He would also have gone but he happened to be lashed also. One poor chap who was going along the poop was washed overboard and we never saw anymore of him. Well, to make an end of this—the ship got turned over on her beam ends⁷⁷⁴—that is a most dangerous position to be in. The poor Captain’s wife was scared for her life—for that matter we all were but it was worse for her than for us—her first voyage. She was up to her knees in water in the cabin. We all thought the ship would never live the day out.

772 If a sailing vessel should need to voyage without cargo, then ballast of little or no value would be loaded to keep the vessel upright. Some or all of this ballast would then be discarded when cargo was loaded. Found 6/4/21 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sailing_ballast.

773 Probably 500 nautical miles (NM).

774 “On her beam ends” means the ship is heeled over on its side; almost capsized. The “beams” are the horizontal transverse timbers of ships. This nautical phrase came about with the allusion to the danger of imminent capsizing if the beam ends were touching the water. From *The Phrase Finder*, found 6/4/21 at <https://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/on-your-beam-ends.html>.

“However we managed to get out of it and that night the wind and sea commenced to go down and we cut a hole through the cabin deck and commenced to throw the cargo overboard until we got the ship upright. We were 5 days and 5 nights getting her fixed up after the wind moderated. We used to lay down at 2AM then commence work again at 5AM—only 3 hours sleep every night but nobody minded—we were so glad we had got out of it.

“The Chief Officer set the man’s legs and thighs. One was all right but the other was wrong and had to be re-set when we got to Liverpool. The Captain was laid up for 2 months after we eventually got to Liverpool, in May 1883, a passage of 113 days and a twelve months voyage. More than half the cargo was spoilt. It consisted of wheat and flour.”⁷⁷⁵

After a couple of months at home, Frank sets out again on *Eskdale* in July 1883, bound for Portland. This time, they run into so much trouble that the ship seemed to be cursed. It took six months for them to get just out of Liverpool:

“...sailed on a Thursday & at 2 a.m. on the Sunday following got into Collision with the Liverpool barque “Rimac” from Queenstown bound to Hull. We ran into her & did her considerable damage & we ourselves had a few holes knocked into us, So we both had to put back. The Capt. Of the Rimac died next morning we arrived back on Thursday after being just a week at sea. We were six weeks getting new bows in the ship...then started away again. We were out 10 days & got into a very heavy gale of wind in the Bay of Biscay & got dismayed so we had to come back again & when home for another six weeks getting new masts...

“The old Captain would not go in the ship anymore said she was too unlucky & the funniest thing happened. We were laying at th B’head docks & his last on the ship as he was going as home, one of the planks tipped up & he fell into the water. The bad luck seemed to follow him to the end.

“At last we were ready for sea again...Well, on the morning we were to sail it was blowing a hard gale from the S.W. & that was night ahead for us after we got clear of the river, so the consequence was did not sail. Well, that was Tuesday & the S.W. gales kept on till the following Saturday night,

but every day all hands had to go to the ship to see if we were going. Well, on Sunday the weather had moderated considerably, so they sent us away but by the time we reached Holyhead, the bad weather had set in again, but eventually we got clear of channel without any more mishaps.

“Our stay at home that time was from the 13th May to 31st October. Out of that time we spent 28 days at sea.”⁷⁷⁶

4th Voy.

Left
 Liverpool July 1883 bound
 for Portland Oregon with
 General cargo in ship
 "Eskdale" sailed on a Thurs
 day & at 2. a. m. on the
 Sunday following got
 into Collision with the
 Liverpool Barque "Kimaë"
 from Queenstown bound
 to Hull we ran into her
 & did her considerable
 damage & we ourselves
 had a few holes knock
 ed into us so we both
 had to put back the
 Capt's of the Kimaë died
 next morning we arrived
 back on Thursday after

A handwritten page from Frank's fourth voyage, on Eskdale.

That difficulty may have been an omen of bad things to come—though the trip to Portland was without incident, another death occurred while there:

“We arrived at Portland, Oregon in March 1884 after a passage of 130 days. Whilst there one of the crew got drowned. He was a young fellow

⁷⁷⁶ Voyage #4, Frank Hewson Voyages, P. 9-11.

from the Shetland Islands. The strange part about it was the same day he was drowned (it was a Saturday) at dinner time he received the 1st letter from his mother. He was so pleased; came to tell us his father had a very prosperous season. He was a fisherman & by 4 pm the same day he was drowned.

“He was painting over the side & fell off the stage [illegible]. Our 2nd mate & one of the apprentices jumped overboard after him but could see nothing of him. We picked his body up about two hours after with the grappling irons & buried him the next day, Sunday.

“The Captains, officers & all the crews of the English ships attended his funeral & some ladies from the shore put lots of flowers on his coffin. The Clergyman made a collection & got 150 Dollars in English money, £20, & they put a very nice tombstone over him & sent a photo of it to his father & mother. All us boys each had one given us too.”⁷⁷⁷

After leaving Portland in June 1884 with a cargo of flour and cases of tinned salmon, *Eskdale* arrives in Liverpool after a passage of 145 days and a voyage of thirteen months. Frank recalls that they sail into Liverpool harbour on a Sunday morning just as the church bells started to ring.⁷⁷⁸

⁷⁷⁷ *ibid.* P. 11-13.

⁷⁷⁸ *Voyage #4. Frank Hewson Voyages.* P. 12.

Chapter 34

Frank Becomes a Captain

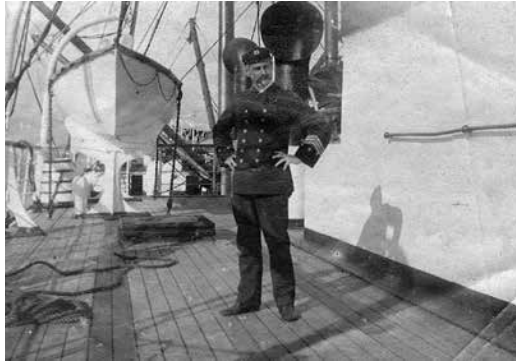
IN FEBRUARY 1885, Frank leaves on his last voyage as an indentured cabin boy. Now twenty years old, he had seen and learned a lot—about the sea, and about life.

Before he leaves, Mrs. Hughes consults with Mr. Danby about something that has clearly been on her mind. On 18 January 1885, she writes:

“He expects to sail about the twenty-eight. Have the goodness to tell me whether, in your opinion, he should be made acquainted with the family history and his own peculiar position, he knows little or nothing of it. I raised the subject with Alice and she said No but I think it would be rather unfair to give him no chance of saying a word in his own favour, though from the kindness of his sisters I have little to apprehend.”⁷⁷⁹

We don't have any evidence whether she ever had this conversation with Frank, but he makes no mention of it in any documents we have access to.

Frank leaves on his fifth voyage, again on *Eskdale*, to San Francisco. It is an uneventful time, except for lack of freights for the return voyage which causes them to remain there at least eight months. During that period the auspicious occasion of Frank's five-year indenture contract ends, on August 8. Frank is now free to go anywhere he chooses.



Frank Hewson on ship. Though the date of this image is unknown, it is further along in his career.

Finally, *Eskdale* is able to leave Sausalito Bay in November, sailing for Dublin with a cargo of wheat and flour. As soon as he arrives in March 1886, Frank leaves ship and hurries home.

There is both sad and happy news waiting for him: “Whilst away on this voyage, Mrs. Hughes died, the person my sisters & I stayed so long with, & Nellie was also married before I got back.”⁷⁸⁰

In addition to catching up with family, Frank has another pressing reason to get home: to take and pass his first examination for second mate, which he does fourteen days after arriving home.⁷⁸¹

Moving up in rank

Frank clearly wants to climb the ladder as quickly as he can, and over the next few years he takes and passes three exams—those for second mate, first mate and finally master, or captain.

There was a lot to know to pass each level. To pass the second mate examination⁷⁸² a man had to be seventeen years of age, have been four years at sea and be able to:

- write legibly and understand the first five rules of arithmetic, and use of logarithms.
- work a day’s work complete, including bearings and distance of the port he is bound to, by Merkator’s method.

780 *Voyage #5. Frank Hewson Voyages*. P. 13.”

781 *ibid.*

782 Second Mate Certificate. Number 016792. April 2, 1886. HEWSON, Frank. Collection: UK and Ireland, Masters and Mates Certificates, 1850-1927. Found 6/17/21 at www.ancestry.co.uk.

- correct the sun's declination for longitude, and find his latitude by merid-ian altitude of the sun.
- work such other easy problems of a like nature as may be put to him.
- understand the use of the sextant, and be able to observe with it, and read off the arc.
- give satisfactory answers as to the rigging and unrigging of ships, stowing of holds; the measurement of the log-line, glass, and lead-line; be conversant with the rule of the road, as regards both steamers and sailing-vessels, and the lights and fog signals carried by them.

After achieving his second mate certification, Frank is immediately rewarded with a third mate position on *Holyrood* in May 1886 bound for Calcutta with a full cargo of salt. Then, because of “differences” during the voyage, the captain pays off the second mate and promotes Frank to the newly vacant position. It is a difficult voyage—they have “very bad weather” off the Cape of Good Hope, and an unusual crime is committed:

“The 1st Mate had one of his fingers bitten off by one of the sailors in a quarrel that they had. Upon arrival at Calcutta in the following August, the sailor had the mate summoned but upon the judge seeing the mate's finger, the sailor got 6 weeks imprisonment with hard labour & upon being released he ran away from the ship the first night.”⁷⁸³

Another incident in Calcutta brings back to Frank memories of his brother Edward in a surprising way:

“...in Calcutta, one of our men died at the Hospital. The undertaker came on board to make arrangements about his burial. So our Chief Mate told him I had a brother that had died in the same hospital. So the chap came along to see me & made arrangements to take me to see his grave the next Sunday & he also showed me the room where he died. It was 10 years after & he remembered all about it the ship he was in & everything connected with it.”⁷⁸⁴

783 *Voyage #6, Frank Hewson Voyages*. P. 14.

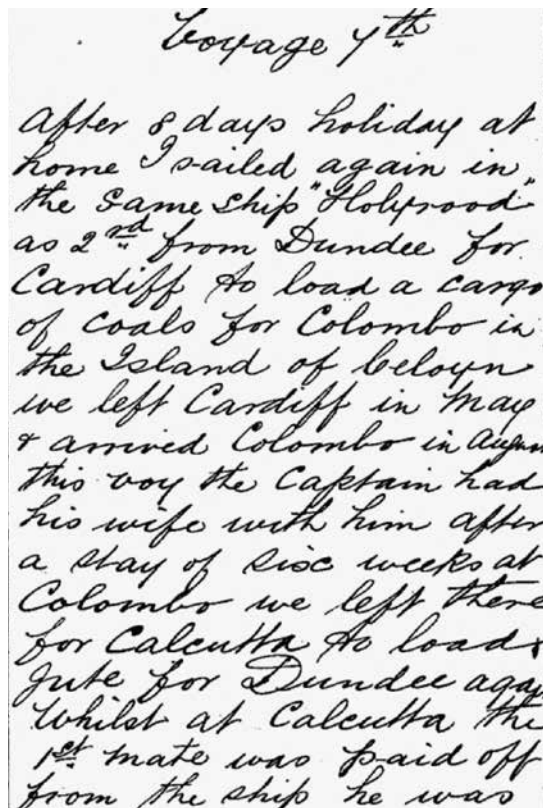
784 *Voyage #7, Frank Hewson Voyages*. P. 17.

Holyrood leaves in December 1886 for Dundee, Scotland with a cargo of jute, arriving in April 1887 after a “very long passage” of 150 days, the entire voyage lasting nearly a year.

Frank sails one more voyage on *Holyrood* after only eight days at home. After loading a cargo of coal in Cardiff, *Holyrood* sails for Colombo, Ceylon⁷⁸⁵ and then to Calcutta.

During the stay in Calcutta, his captain encourages Frank to go ashore and take his exam for first mate. It turns out exams aren’t available there until the following January, but he ultimately gets the job anyway:

“Whilst at Calcutta the 1st Mate was paid off from the ship. He was a splendid sailor man & first rate officer, but he could not keep away from



Voyage 7th

After 8 days holiday at home I sailed again in the same ship "Holyrood" as 2nd from Dundee for Cardiff to load a cargo of coals for Colombo in the Island of Ceylon we left Cardiff in May & arrived Colombo in August this voy the Captain had his wife with him after a stay of six weeks at Colombo we left there for Calcutta to load jute for Dundee again whilst at Calcutta the 1st mate was paid off from the ship he was

A handwritten page of Frank Hewson's log of Voyage #7 to Calcutta.

the drink when in port. So the Captain told him he would have to leave the ship. Well, after a very serious quarrel between the two of them, one day he left. When the Captain came on board the same evening, he told me I was to go up & pass & he would promote me to the 1st Mate's berth, but upon making enquiries the next day, we found that the examination's day was not until the following January, it only being once every three months out there. In L'pool it is held every week & a special exam would have cost me £12 & I would have to have passed again when we arrived in England, so the Captain told me never to mind, he would ship a mate for the passage home & if I passed should have the berth next voyage. Well, the poor chap he took was not competent for the berth & the Captain being a strict man took a great dislike of the poor fellow & he had me acting as Mate nearly all the way home."⁷⁸⁶

They arrive at Dundee in March 1888 after a voyage of ten months, and Frank goes immediately to Liverpool, where he takes his exam for first mate. He hopes that his captain from *Holyrood* will have a berth for him on the next voyage as he has promised. Frank passes, and on May 12, 1888, he acquires his first mate certificate.⁷⁸⁷

To become a first mate, a man must be nineteen years of age, have served five years at sea, of which one year either second or only mate, or as both, and he must be able to observe and calculate the amplitude of the sun and deduce the variation of the compass and be able to find the longitude by chronometer by the usual methods.

He must be able to:

- lay off the place of the ship on the chart, both by bearings of known objects, and by latitude and longitude.
- determine the error of a sextant, and to adjust it, also to find the time of high water from the known time at full and change.
- observe azimuths and compute the variation.
- compare chronometers and keep their rates and find the longitude by them from an observation of the sun.

⁷⁸⁶ *Voyage #7. Frank Hewson Voyages*. P. 15.

⁷⁸⁷ Second Mate Certificate. Number 016792. April 2, 1886. HEWSON, Frank. Collection: UK and Ireland, Masters and Mates Certificates, 1850-1927. Found 6/17/21 at www.ancestry.co.uk

- work the latitude by single altitude of the sun off the meridian; and be able to use and adjust the sextant by the sun.
- moor and unmoor, and to keep a clear anchor; to carry out an anchor; to stew a hold; and to make the requisite entries in the ship's log.

He must have knowledge of the use and management of the mortar and rocket lines in the case of the stranding of a vessel, as explained in the official log-book.

A more extensive knowledge of seamanship will be required, as to shifting large spars and sails, managing a ship in stormy weather, taking in and making sail, shifting yards and masts etc. and getting heavy weights, anchors etc. in and out; casting a ship on a lee-shore; and securing the masts in the event of accident to the bowsprit.

This doesn't mean he will get a job as a first mate, though; his youth works against him with people who didn't yet know his capabilities. But in the end, not getting the job he wants turns out to be fortuitous:

“I went to Liverpool for my exam & got through quite successfully but the same day I had finished received a wire from the Captain saying he had left the ship through some bother he had with the owners & the new Captain sent me word he was taking a 1st Mate with him that he had had the previous voyage, but I think he thought I was too young to be 1st Mate of such a large ship... anyway, the owners wanted me to go in another of their ships, the *Balmoral*. Well I was going but through something else turning up at the last minute, I did not go.

“I was very glad afterward because the crew were a very bad lot. She was bound to Capetown & two days before she arrived there one of the sailors stabbed the 1st Mate to death...”⁷⁸⁸

Frank's next voyage is on *Saint Magnus* as second mate in May 1888 to Chile and Antwerp. Upon arriving in Antwerp in May 1889, Frank sees *Mitredale* at dock, and goes on board to see a good friend and mate from his previous voyages. The friend is gone, having returned home to pass his own exam for master. The second mate, who Frank also knows, suggests that Frank apply for the master's berth:

“I said no, I had just come off a long voyage & my intention was to go home & pass my exam for Captain then join some ship line, but after



TOP TO BOTTOM: Captain Frank Hewson with his sextant, one of the many pieces of equipment a captain needed. Another duty of the Captain's was often to also serve as ship's doctor—a family heirloom, this wooden medicine box is one Frank had made to store drugs while at sea. It required a lock to prevent theft. The box belongs to Frank's great-granddaughter Margaret Hewson. Frank's barometer is another of the few remaining artifacts. Today, it belongs to Frank's grandson Thomas Hewson.



considering for a while I thought perhaps if I go as one voyage as 1st Mate, I might stand a better chance of getting on quicker in steam. So, I applied for the 1st Mate's berth & got it. I only arrived in Antwerp on the Sunday & the following Thursday I sailed again in the *Mitredale* for San Francisco. My sisters were in a great way after being so long away not to have gone home for a few days.”⁷⁸⁹

After this voyage to San Francisco and back, Frank is eager to take his final exam, which he does fourteen days after arriving home. He had been away from home for nearly two years, but his hard work has paid off. On April 26, 1890, Frank becomes a certified master,⁷⁹⁰ able to serve as a ship's captain. He is only twenty-four years old.



Frank Hewson's master certificate from 1890.

To be a master, a man must be twenty-one years of age, and have been six years at sea, of which at least one year must have been as first or only mate, and one year as second mate.

789 *ibid.* P. 18-19.

790 Master certificate. Number 016792. April 29, 1890. HEWSON, Frank. Collection: UK and Ireland, Masters and Mates Certificates, 1850-1927. Found 6/17/21 at www.ancestry.co.uk.

He must be able to:

- find the latitude by a star, etc.
- explain the nature of the attraction of the ship's iron upon the compass, and as to the method of determining it.
- explain the laws of the tides as is necessary to enable him to shape a course, and to compare his soundings with the depths marked on the charts.
- construct jury rudders and rafts; and as to his resources for the preservation of the ship's crew in the event of wreck; and of his knowledge of lights and fog signals and steering and sailing rules.

He must:

- possess a sufficient knowledge of what he is required to do by law, as to entry and discharge, and the management of his crew, and as to penalties and entries to be made in the official log; and a knowledge of the measures for preventing and checking the outbreak of scurvy on board ship.
- Have knowledge of invoices, charter party, Lloyd's agent, and as to the nature of bottomry, and he must be acquainted with the leading lights of the channel he has been accustomed to navigate, or which he is going to use.

In June 1890, Frank sails from Cardiff for Valparaiso, Chile in *Mitredale* with a cargo of coal, arriving in August.⁷⁹¹ His writing does not indicate what position he works on this voyage, but we know it isn't Captain. They discharge coal at several locations in Chile, staying there until November when they receive orders to return to Falmouth. They experience very bad weather on the homeward passage and their stock of fresh water is spoiled. For fourteen days before reaching Falmouth, they have only thirty gallons of fresh water to last thirty men.⁷⁹²

After returning to Falmouth in March 1891, the ship's captain suggests a plan for Frank to receive his first captain's berth, but it also turns into disappointment:

⁷⁹¹ *Voyage 10. Frank Hewson Voyages. P.20.*

⁷⁹² *ibid.*

“The Captain told me to leave the ship & go to Liverpool to apply for command of a ship called the *Parknook*, he giving me a letter of introduction to the owner & he did all in his power to get me the ship. Well, the owners kept me running around after them for 14 days, then coolly said they had made up their minds to let the old Captain go back. I was so disappointed I went from their office to a steam ship line & applied for one of their two years previous I had been in one of their sailing ships so they gave me a berth right away in a S.S. called the *Saint Regulus* & who should I find Chief of her but the same man that had been Chief of the *Saint Magnus* when I was 2nd.”⁷⁹³

Frank’s next voyage on *Saint Regulus* takes a cargo of coal in May 1891 to Batavia, Indonesia, continuing to Calcutta to load, and then returning to Dunkirk in August 1891.⁷⁹⁴ On reaching Cardiff, Frank applies for leave to go home, and the decision he makes next will prove to be one the most fateful of his life:

“The Captain said as we were only going to be there 3 days he could not spare me. So, I thought well, I have been away 4 months & now they want me to start on a fresh voyage to Singapore without going home, so thought it best to give up my berth & go to L’pool & try to get into some ship that always went to L’pool.

“After I had been home about two weeks, I met one of my apprentice friends. We had served our time together. He expected to get Captain on that ship & asked me to go with him as Chief, he promising to get me a ship as Master in the same employ after my being a voyage or so as Mate, so I agreed to it. But a day or two after, his owners lost one of their ships outside Dundee & it spoilt his chance for Captain for that time. So he said, well let us be in San Francisco together.

“There was a ship called the *Crown of Italy* on the opposite side of the dock, so I went on board & found she wanted a Chief Mate so applied for it & got the berth.”⁷⁹⁵

793 *ibid.* P. 20-1.

794 *ibid.* P. 21.

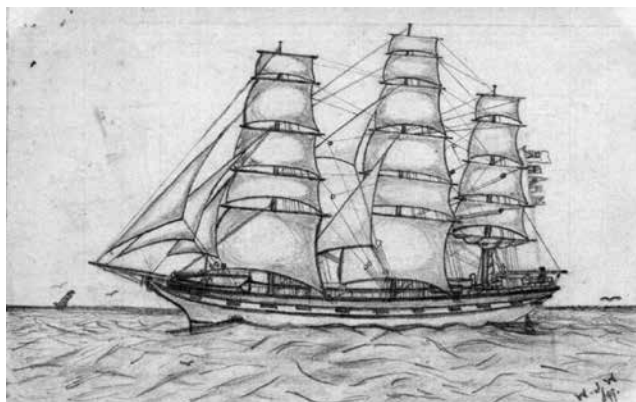
795 *ibid.* P. 21-2.

Chapter 35

Crown of Italy

FRANK'S NEXT VOYAGE WOULD END in an infamous shipwreck and miraculous survival story of the crew. *Crown of Italy* was a British sailing barque of 1,618 grt⁷⁹⁶ that was wrecked off Cape San Diego, Tierra del Fuego on December 23, 1891.

This drawing of *Crown of Italy* was made by Second Mate William Wade. Through research for this book, a connection was made with Dean Wade in Australia, the great-great-grandson of William Wade. He became an



A sketch of *Crown of Italy* made by Second Mate William Wade.
Courtesy Dean Wade, Wade's great-great-grandson.

⁷⁹⁶ Gross registered tonnage (GRT) represents the total internal volume of a vessel, where one register ton is equal to a volume of 100 cubic feet (2.83 m³); a volume that, if filled with fresh water, would weigh around 2.83 tonnes. Found 6/5/21 at <https://worldoceanreview.com/en/wor-1/transport/global-shipping/key-shipping-terms-in-brief/>.

important supporter of the book and provided details and artifacts from this voyage which his ancestor shared with ours.

He was able to confirm from a copy of the voyage's Crew Agreement (which he has a copy of and has shared with us) that Frank was first mate on the voyage, a fact we did not previously have. He was also able to provide the in-depth timeline of events from the day of the wreck until the crew were rescued nearly three months later. We, in turn, were able to share details he had not previously had, about the crew's survival, which his ancestor did not write about, but which Frank Hewson did.

Captains & mates

As first (or chief) mate on this voyage, Frank would make the monthly sum of seven pounds, ten shillings and zero pence.⁷⁹⁷ He had requested and been granted an allotment of three pounds, fifteen shillings monthly, which represented half his wages.⁷⁹⁸

Dean Bray describes the difference in the roles of the captain and the first mate this way:

“In the traditional division of place and labour on square-riggers, the captain stayed on the poop unless some urgent necessity brought him down to the main deck to emphasize an order face to face or to add his weight to a line or help repair damage, his sudden democratic presence a sign of how desperate things were.

“The (first) mate was the only officer to go forward right to the foremast and the bow, traditionally the territory of seamen “before the mast,” when general sail handling or anchor work was going on. Although the (first) mate was the executive officer for the whole ship, the forepart of the vessel belonged to him. The mate did not go aloft during normal sail handling; he was more valuable on deck with his overall view of the forepart of the ship, a perspective distant from that of the captain near the stern.”⁷⁹⁹

797 12 pennies (12d) to a shilling (1s) and 20 shillings to a pound.

798 Conrad's Shipmates in British Ships. Kennerley, Alsten. In *Conradian*. Spring 2012. Vol. 37. No. 1. P. 58-79. Found 6/4/21 at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23264495>. If a seaman requested the issue of an allotment note, he had to state the sum, which was limited to half the monthly wages, the beneficiary (for example, wife or mother), and frequency (for example, monthly). The shipping master retained evidence of allotments, but the notes went to the beneficiaries who could present them at the shipowners' offices, a month after the ship sailed.

799 Email. Dean Bray to the Author. May 5, 2021. Paraphrased from *The Way of a Ship*. Lundy, Derek. Ecco Publishing. March 2004.

Anatomy of a merchant ship's cargo

The cargo of merchant ships is a good reflection of the lifestyle and culture of the time. It's also a way to visualize just how big the ships were. Again, from Dean Bray's archives, we have the official record of the cargo of a previous voyage of *Crown of Italy*, which was delivered to Melbourne, Australia port in March 1891, and likely did not differ much from its general cargo on its ill-fated voyage from Liverpool bound for San Francisco in October 1891.

Here's what *Crown of Italy's* cargo hold contained on that previous voyage.

- 139,450 slates, 9,443 bars, 3,454 bdls, 329 plts iron
- 1,299 bdls hoop iron
- 600 bdls sheet iron
- 782 bdls, 9 cks wire
- 349 rls wire netting
- 120 pcs and pkgs machinery
- 2 cs gas engines
- 81 iron pipes
- 95 bdls standards
- 33 cs mangles
- 40 bdls rods
- 24 cs sheep shears
- 615 bxs tin-plates
- 8 crab winches and handles
- 44 axle arms
- 31 pkgs hardware
- 110 pcs carnwood
- 430 pcs fustic
- 200 kegs sulphate copper
- 4,000 sks fine salt
- 1,100 bags common salt
- 20 cks soda
- 20 brls soda ash
- 34 kegs soda crystals
- 60 brls silicate soda
- 237 drums caustic soda
- 511 kegs bicarb soda
- 4 cks muriate of ammonia
- 8 brls pure alkali
- 59 cks 63 cs tiles
- 107 slabs billiard slate
- 606 pkgs china
- glass and earthenware
- 50 hhds stout, 2,071 cs stout
- 20 hhds, 10 hf-hhds, 10 hf-brls beer
- 200 cs bottled beer
- 10 cs sugar
- 95 brls rum
- 600 cs spirits
- 312 cks, 22 qr-cks, 27 octaves 3, 663 cs whisky
- 40 qr-cks wine
- 100 cs oil-men's stores
- 10 cs sugar
- 5 cks extract
- 3 cs varnish
- 4 bags lignum vitae
- 94 bls waste
- 401 pkgs soft goods, boots, and shoes
- 303 reels
- 52 bls paper
- 6 cs rough plate-glass
- 1 cs cartridge cases
- 6 cs show cards

The measurements shown in abbreviations are roughly interpreted as bundles, rolls, casks, pieces, packages, cases, boxes, kegs, sacks, bags, barrels, drums, hogsheads, half-hogsheads, half-barrels, bales and quarter-casks.

SIGNATURES OF CREW.		Year of birth.	Place of Country where born.	If by the name, designation or R. V. S.	Ship in which he last served, and Year of discharge (optional).	Rank, Name and United No. of the ship in which he served.	Rank.	Place.	In what capacity engaged, and if engaged, date, No. of certificate.	Time at which he is to be discharged.
1	Geo Greenbank R	1832	Blackburn	1891	Same				21/1/91	
2	F. Hewson	1835	Leicester		1891	1st Mate			21/1/91	
3	Wm J. Wade	1849	Stonely		do	do			21/1/91	
4	John D. Hewson	1855	London		do	do			21/1/91	
5	John Williams	1835	Borham		do	do			21/1/91	
6	Carl Smith	1847	Flensburg		do	do			21/1/91	
7	Thomas Gleason	1847	Dublin		do	do			21/1/91	
8	Charles Turner	1847	Spool		do	do			21/1/91	
9	William Wainwright	1847	London		do	do			21/1/91	
10	Martin Canning	1846	Newport		do	do			21/1/91	
11	Henry Noble	1847	London		do	do			21/1/91	
12	Joseph Roger	1848	London		do	do			21/1/91	
13	Henry Coleman	1847	Dublin		do	do			21/1/91	
14	Samuel Barrett	1847	London		do	do			21/1/91	
15	John Graham	1847	London		do	do			21/1/91	
16	Francis Clapham	1847	London		do	do			21/1/91	
17	E. Egerton	1847	London		do	do			21/1/91	
18	John Harrison	1847	London		do	do			21/1/91	
19	James A. Berg	1847	London		do	do			21/1/91	
20	W. P. Hill	1847	London		do	do			21/1/91	

The crew list for the Crown of Italy showing "F. Hewson" as "1st Mate." Courtesy Dean Bray.

Here is Frank's journal description of this most harrowing journey and its aftermath, in its entirety:

"Sailed from Liverpool for San Francisco in Crown of Italy in October 1891 with a very valuable general cargo; the Captain carrying his wife and daughter — a girl of about 15 years old. We sailed on Saturday. On Sunday morning we put into Holyhead Harbour through stress of weather. We were there for about 10 days heavy gales from S. W. blowing.

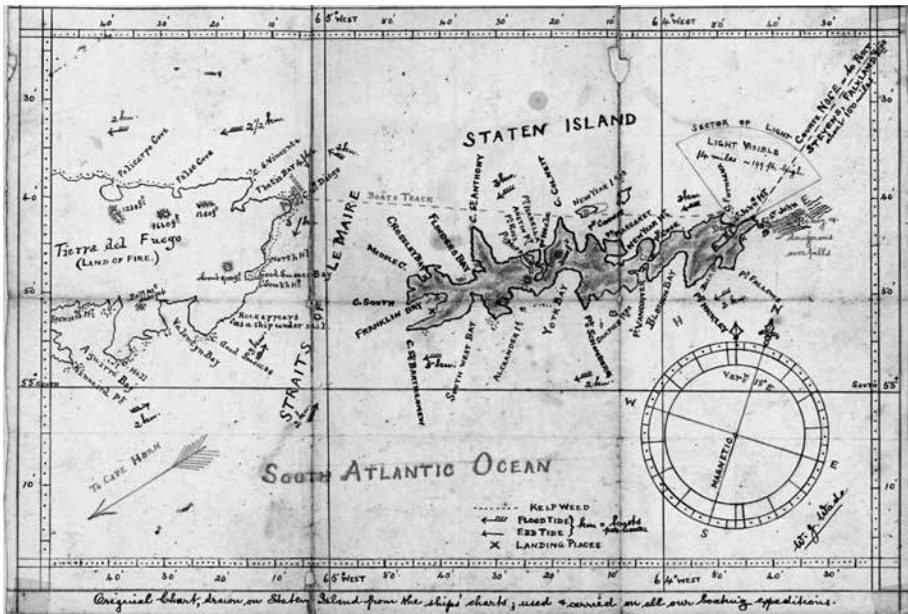
"After leaving Holyhead all went well with us until 23rd Dec. — at noon that day we made the land of Terra de Fuego and the Captain resolved

to go through the Straits of Le Maire, which is a passage between the mainland and an island called Staten Island. About 8 p.m. — just as we were entering the Straits the ship suddenly struck a reef of rocks and after trying to get her off a couple of hours found it no use.

“We provisioned and got the lifeboats over the side ready for leaving the ship. Then we went on trying to work her off the reef all night but with no success. At 5 a.m. next morning the ship was starting to break-up, so we decided to leave her and go to a small Argentine settlement on the N.E. point of Staten Island—the place being 45 miles from where the ship was wrecked. There were 40 of us altogether. We left the ship in 3 boats and were fortunate to have a fine day. We all lost all our clothes etc. —being unable to take them in the boat, as the principal thing was food and water.

“We loaded the boats with their edges about 8 inches from the water, which was far too deep, but of course for all we knew we might have got blown out to sea and unable to reach the Settlement. We took the cat, parrot, and pigs in the boats with us, the only live things remaining on board being the chickens. In my boat I reached the Settlement at 8 p.m. on Christmas Eve and was very kindly treated by the people there—18 men and two women—wives of the Master and Steward of the Island. I was very uneasy on arriving there to see nothing of the Captain or the other boat—but it was dark so nothing could be done that night so when next morning came—Christmas Day, I started away with the boat to look for them but had just got out of the bay when I saw them coming. They had landed on another part of the Island—about 15 miles away—lit a fire and slept on the rocks.

“The Captain’s boat arrived the next day. When we were all settled the Master of the Island told us they had a small Steamer that ran between Sandy Point and Staten Island and that she would be back in ten days and would then take us to Sandy Point where we would be transferred to one of the Pacific Steamers for home. We asked him how he was off as regards food. He said, ‘Oh I have plenty to last for 12 months.’ So we made up our minds to wait until this small steamer turned up. Well after 10 days had expired, we asked him why there was no sign of the steamer. Day after day he said, She is sure to be here tomorrow. This went on for 6 weeks when he suddenly told us he had only enough food to last for $2\frac{2}{3}$ days more. The



This hand-drawn map made by Second Mate William Wade shows all the key locations described in Frank's story of their eighty-some days of survival. The hand-written legend (below) was also made by Wade. Courtesy Dean Bray.

- A.- Position of wreck
 B.- Settlement at Cape St. Johns
 C.- Port books
 D.- New Year Islands (where some of us broke our journey & stayed on our way to Staten Ind).
 E.- Position of our adventure with "overfalls"
 F.- St. John's Harbour
 G.- Heaviest part of "overfalls" & eddies

stupid fellow had been letting everybody have as much as they wanted in the belief the provisions would arrive.

"I forgot to say earlier that on our arrival he told us that a Government steamer came from Buenos Ayres every 3 months to bring them a fresh

supply of food. He did not wish to appear short of food as it would have been a slur on the Argentine Government if we had later reported the place, because it is reckoned to be a Life-Saving Station for Ships' Crews that are cast away. If the place were under English Government, it would always be kept provisioned for a year — even our Light Ships and Light Houses have always 6 months stores in them — only a mile or so from the shore — whereas this place is hundreds of miles from civilization.”

Searching for help

“We talked it over and made up our minds to go off to the first ship we saw in a lifeboat belonging to the Island, as by this time ours had got pretty-well played-out. Two days later a ship hove in sight so we started away from the Island at 6:30 a.m. — a dull cloudy morning with a freshening wind. In the boat were 8 sailors, carpenter, 2nd mate and myself and also the Boss of the Island. He said if we were to board a ship and get provisions from here without his being there (we being under his protection to a certain extent) he would get into serious trouble.

“We followed the ship up till nearly noon, but they either did not see us or would not take any notice as we were getting a far way from the Island. We gave up all hope of them stopping for us, so turned the boat around went back again—getting to the Settlement about 8 p.m. that night. Two days later we started again for another ship. After a long pull they saw us coming and stopped the ship. We got on board found she was an Italian vessel bound for Callao. The Captain told me he was very sorry but he only had enough bread to last him to Callao. As I did not believe him he sent me down to his Store Room with the Steward and sure enough, he had only half a tank of biscuits. He gave each of us in the boat 1 biscuit each. That was the first food we had had that day.

“By the time we left the ship we were about 20 miles from the Island but we set the sails and made fairly good headway. We arrived about 1 mile from the Island at 5 p.m. One of the smaller boats came out to help to tow us in, the wind having fallen to a calm as we neared the Island. The boat we were in was a very heavy one to pull—about a mile from the entrance to

the Harbour there are very heavy overfalls and the tide rips, which makes it very dangerous, and if we did not go in with the tide in our favour we had to wait until the next one. I could see we had lost the tide so I told the fellows to pull away in the small boat and we would get in with the next tide. We could see the tide rips were going to be very heavy. That day it came on to rain and we lost sight of the other boat, taking it for granted she had got in all right. We got through the overfalls⁸⁰⁰—(with) each fresh sea we expected the boat to be swamped. We started away for the Island again. After going along for an hour we made out the little boat and could not understand why she had not got in.

“As we got closer we saw them waving to us and then saw the boat was bottom up so bore down for them as quickly as possible. They were all clinging to the bottom of the boat. We took them into our boat. Of course they were all wet through so we all took off some of our clothes and gave them as best we could. They said the tide was too strong for them to pull against it and eventually they got into the tide rip. Although the boat was end on to it the first sea got hold of her and turned her completely over. It was most fortunate that not one of them was drowned. We got back to the Island at 2 a.m. next morning, after being 19 hours in the boat without any food excepting the biscuit given us.

“As we had been so unfortunate with the ship, the Master of the Island told us he thought there was a hut with provisions in at a place called Cook’s Harbour—16 miles from where we were, so we decided to go as things were very bad—nothing to eat but a few small shellfish we gathered on the beach. We started away from the Island one morning and arrived at Cook’s Harbour about noon. We went ashore and searched all over; but there was no signs of any hut or anything else. We resolved to stop the night there and start away next morning so we lit a big fire and slept around it—taking turns at keeping one hours watch each man—next morning the weather looked very threatening so I woke them all up and started away from the place at once, thinking we might manage to get to our place before the gale started.”

800 Overfalls are a turbulent stretch of open water caused by the wind blowing against a current, by a strong current or tide over an underwater ridge, or by a meeting of currents. Found 3/2/21 at <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/overfall>.

MAROONED SAILORS.
 —————
Crown of Italy Wreck
 —————
RECALLED BY SYDNEY SURVIVOR.

Captain W. J. Wade, one of the survivors of the wreck of the British sailing ship *Crown of Italy*, speaking at the Shiplovers' Society of New South Wales last night, described the exciting experiences of the crew, who were forced to live for 72 days on Staten Island, when the ship was wrecked in the Strait of Le Maire, near Cape Horn, in 1892. The 33 survivors, including Captain Wade, rowed for two days from the scene of the wreck to St. John's Harbour, an outpost maintained by the Argentine Government on Staten Island.

After 30 days provisions ran short, and, as no passing ships called at the island, it was necessary for the half-starved men to row miles out to sea in order to try to attract the notice of vessels which were sighted. Re-entering the harbour, the weakened men had to run the gauntlet of an extremely dangerous tide-rip, and disaster was narrowly averted on several occasions. Once the frail ship's boat was storm-driven 30 miles from the port to the eastern extremity of the island, into a region where the mountainous overfalls caused by tide and current meeting were considered dangerous even to large ships. Their escape was miraculous.

Captain Wade vividly described many adventures, and gave an insight into the feelings of men who were daily facing death from starvation and praying for deliverance. Seventy-two days after they had reached the tiny settlement, a mere caprice on the part of the captain brought the British warship *Cleopatra* to the port.

This *Sydney Morning Herald* news story of May 21, 1936, describes a presentation made by William Wade, a captain who was Second Mate on *Crown of Italy*, following the dramatic marooning and rescue of the crew. William J. Greenbank was the captain on this voyage.

More danger, and a miracle

"We had a strong breeze, freshening all the time, so we ran back in a very short time. Just as we were rounding the Point to enter our Port, one of the masts broke so it crippled us completely. We commenced to pull but it was of no use as the gale had set in properly. By now were drifting down onto the rocks and expected to be smashed to pieces in a few minutes. We

drifted to about 200 yards off the rocks when the tide suddenly got hold of the boat and drifted her right out to sea. It really seemed like a miracle as a few minutes before we had all given ourselves up for lost.

“When we saw the way things were going we got the Carpenter to mend the broken mast, as we never used to go away without tools in the boat, and rigged up storm sails, (This day the overfalls were awful to look at, but we got through them all right.) It was now blowing a strong gale off the Island so in consequence we drifted away very fast. About noon the weather commenced to moderate, by 2 p.m. the wind had dropped to a calm leaving a very nasty sea running. After talking it over we resolved to start and pull for the Island—25 miles away. We could just see the tops of the mountains. We pulled for 14 hours without stopping and managed to reach the Settlement about 4 the next morning.

“After being away from the Island for nearly 2 days they were all very glad to see us back again, although we had not brought them anything to eat. The morning we were blown off, they were watching us, but could not give us any assistance, the sea being too bad, and when they saw us go right out of sight; thought they had lost us for good. After a couple of days rest we thought we would try another part of the Island, so we went to a place 18 miles away to see if we could find anything.”

Desperate fare

“As soon as we got there we killed about 6 penguins. We had taken a pot with us so we lit a fire and boiled them and they tasted very good. We all had a rest for a couple of hours then started to look for young seals; our idea being to kill them and take them back to the Island. We got six and that night had the best feed we had had for a long time. We had no pepper, salt, or anything, just boiled them and ate them. We were so hungry they tasted so good, we decided to stop all the next day and see how many more we could get. We started early next morning and killed 44 young ones, each weighing about 30 lbs. We had to carry them to the boat—1/2 mile away—because of numerous rocks. This took all day. We were all so tired we decided to sleep on the beach and start back next morning arriving at

the Settlement about noon. We gave them all a good feed. We were all absolutely worn out by the time we got back.

“The next morning was a beautiful day, a ship came in sight but the Captain would not have me or the boats’ crew called so he got some fresh men and started away about 6 a.m. By 8 he reached the ship. I was very uneasy because I knew if it came on to blow and he was detained in the boat for long, it might prove very serious as he was such an old man and weak from the want of food. Luckily the weather kept calm, and he was back again at 10 a.m.

“The ship was the “Glenesk” bound from Rio de Janeiro for Valparaiso. They gave us 3 cwt bread, 2 barrels flour, 400 Salt Beef, 300 Pork, 300 lbs. peas, some sugar and other small things—as much as the boat would hold. We made up our minds to divide a certain portion out to each person every day and hoped by then the small steamer would turn up or the large one from Buenos Ayres bringing their stores. We also gave everyone that liked it a certain portion of the seals’ flesh. Of course we salted them all as soon as we reached the Settlement. After 10 days a ship hove in sight and being a fine morning, we thought we would go off and make sure of getting some more provisions, in case of need as we had all suffered so much before, we started away about 6 a.m. and shortly after the wind suddenly changed, as is often the case in those latitudes, without any warning at all and by the time we reached the ship, it was blowing half a gale of wind.”

The overfalls

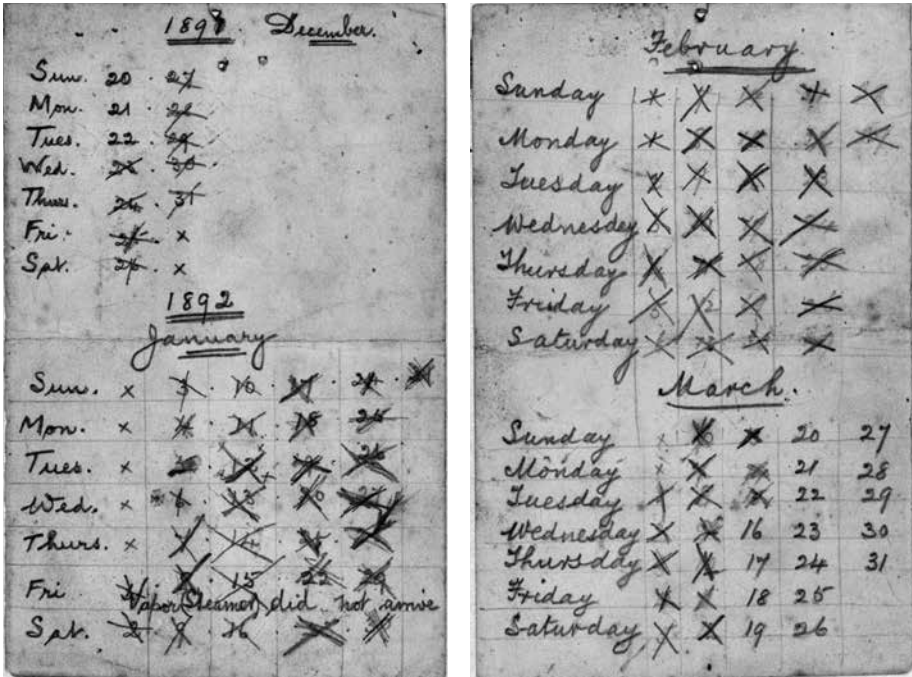
“The ship was the “Regina Margarita” of Valparaiso, bound from Naples to Valparaiso. The Captain gave us plenty of stores and took letters from us to our people, also promising to report our condition on the Island to the British Consul on his arrival at Valparaiso. The weather was rapidly getting worse so we left the ship as quickly as possible and started back, there being a very nasty sea on; but I thought I would risk running for the Island as I could see it was going to set in thick, and knew if we did not get in before it came on we should have to spend the night in the boat. We were going with the sea right ahelm—that means broad on our side—the most dangerous place for it. The first thing we knew we got

into the overfalls and she shipped a large sea, half filling the boat and wetting us all through.

“Luckily, she was a proper lifeboat and had 8 patent valves for letting the water out. Had it not been so the chances are we should all have been lost. I forgot to say the salt water spoilt all the stores we had, the biscuits being in bags got soaked and the sugar all dissolved. Fortunately the tinned stuff was alright. After that we at once put the boat head-on to sea until she got out of the overfalls. By the time she had done so a dense fog had set in and we were all shivering with cold. We had a compass in the boat so set a course for the other end of the Island as we were frightened of the tide drifting us past the N.E. Point and we knew if we ever got there we would never be able to get back. About noon we opened a couple of tins of meat and had some of the salty biscuits steeped in fresh water. We luckily had a small barrel of water in the boat and a good plug in it, so it was all right. At 3 p.m. the fog lifted a little so we just saw the tops of some of the mountains and we had a good idea where we were, so kept the boat in for the shore. At 6 p.m. the wind fell quite light so we stood on until we could hear the waves breaking on the rocks.

“At 8 p.m. the fog suddenly lifted, and we found ourselves about the entrance to Cook’s Harbour—about 16 miles from our own Port. We knew how the tide was setting so made up our minds to wait until it had half run the other way and then with the wind and tide we hoped to run back in about 2 hrs. We waited until midnight—then started at 2 a.m. We just sighted the light they had left burning for us in case we turned up. Then we commenced to lose ground and by pulling and sailing we could not do any good. You see the tide had turned the other way. If we had started half an hour before we would have been all right, but it was only guesswork. We knew we could not get in that night, so we made up our minds to go back to Cook’s Harbour arriving there at 5 a.m.

“We all jumped out of the boat and commenced running up and down to warm ourselves as we had been wet from the morning previous. After that we lit a fire and dried our clothes—then had something to eat and at 10 a.m. all our clothes being dry and all feeling freshened up a lot we started away. On nearing the entrance, we found it blowing there, we resolved to stop until the weather was better, so we stayed there until the next day and arrived back about 11 a.m., after being away 2 days and some odd hours.



Second Mate William Wade also kept a calendar of their time stranded on Staten Island. Image of calendar courtesy of Dean Bray, great-great grandson of William Wade.

“The Captain was so thankful to see us back as once again, they all thought we had gone. We got back on Thursday and on the following Saturday at 2 p.m. the little Steamship we had been looking for so long steamed into the Harbour. They said they were ordered away on a Surveying Passage that had kept them so long. She brought plenty of provisions and said the large steamer would arrive the following Saturday. She would take us to Monte Video. On the Monday morning, however, an English Man-of-War was in sight, so we signalled to attract his attention and he came into the Harbour.”

Rescued

“The Captain, after hearing our story, took us all on board and landed us two days later at Port Stanley in the Falkland Islands. We were all treated very kindly there and the ladies there fitted up the Captain’s wife

with a new lot of clothes—even giving her a box to keep them in. They would not let her pay a cent. The people on the Island were going to make a subscription for the sailors only they went and got drunk and disgusted everybody so the people would not have any more to do with them and served them right too.

“After three days we left for Monte Video in the German S/S “Komas.” We were all treated very kindly whilst on board. When we arrived at Monte Video the Captain’s wife, daughter and the six apprentice boys proceeded to England in the same Steamer. The Captain, myself, 2nd Officer and the rest of the crew were landed at Monte Video, where British Consul sent us to the Sailor’s Home to live.

“Five days after our arrival there, the Sailors were all sent home in the P.S.N. Co’s “Sorata”. The Captain, 2nd Officer, Carpenter, Man at Wheel and Look Out Man being kept in Monte Video for a Court of Inquiry, which was held a few days later.

“After it was over we were sent home in the Steamer “Igu” to Southampton, arriving there in April 1892 and next day I arrived home. I have not mentioned the Inquiry as you have a copy with my other papers. When I arrived home, I had no clothes and was in a very bad way. I forgot to mention whilst on the Island one of the men died. He had consumption. It was whilst we were so short of food. In fact, he died of starvation as he was not able to eat the rough stuff we picked off the beach.”⁸⁰¹

The court of inquiry

After being rescued after shipwreck, and more than eighty days of survival in terrible circumstances, Captain Greenbank, a fifty-nine-year-old American from Philadelphia, First Mate Frank Hewson and Second Mate William Wade were required to attend a court of inquiry in Montevideo before they were released to travel back to England.

A court of inquiry was used after any incident involving the destruction and abandonment of a ship and loss of life to determine if any fault was to be assigned, though it wasn’t a common occurrence. The owners of a ship would

801 *Voyage #12. Frank Hewson Voyages*. P.23-43. Though he numbered it this way, *Crown of Italy* was actually his eleventh voyage, and *Star of Russia* his twelfth. We can’t surmise why he numbered them out of chronological order.

(No. 4518.)

"CROWN OF ITALY."

FINDING and Order of a Naval Court held at Monte Video, at the British Consulate General, on the 25th March 1892 and 26th March 1892, to inquire into the circumstances connected with the stranding and abandonment of the British sailing ship "Crown of Italy," of the Port of Liverpool, Official No. 91,253, when on a voyage from Liverpool to San Francisco, and the cause of such wreck and abandonment, and to inquire into the conduct of the master and crew of the said vessel.

The "Crown of Italy" was an iron vessel, ship-rigged, of 1,551 tons registered, 1,617 gross tonnage, official number 91,253, built at Leith in 1885, and belonging to the Port of Liverpool.

It appears from the evidence given before this Court, that she sailed from Liverpool on or about the 10th October 1891, bound for San Francisco, with general cargo and 31 hands all told, and in addition the wife and daughter of master. On 11th October 1891 she put into Holyhead, on account of stress of weather, and sailed from thence on the 22nd October 1891. Nothing of importance occurred during the passage until the 23rd December 1891, when the vessel struck on the coast of Tierra del Fuego, off Cape San Diego.

The opinion of the Court is as follows:—

1. Cause or Causes of the Casualty.

Ship got into an eddy, tide, or current inside the regular tide described in Sailing Directions, and was set to the southward to the shore, instead of being set, as would be expected by the time of tide, to the N.W. when to the westward of Cape San Diego.

The Court is of opinion that the course steered gave too slight a margin for clearing the rocks off Cape San Diego (taking into consideration the strong eddy currents in the vicinity) between 6 to 8 p.m. Hand-lead should have been more used. Had this been done it might have been found advantageous to let go an anchor. The ship was navigated with care up to 6 p.m., but the E.S.E. course, under the circumstances, was too close to the land.

The Court is further of opinion that the ship did strand on a ledge of rocks, not marked on the chart, outside the rocks that are marked. It is to be regretted that master was not supplied with Notice to Mariners, No. 181, which would have warned him

error in judgment in navigating his ship as above stated after 6 p.m.

3. Whether such negligence or default occasioned or contributed to the loss of the ship.

This error of judgment, committed after 6 p.m., contributed to the loss of the ship.

4. Any special precautions which the case shows should be taken in future.

That, taking into consideration the probability that rocks stretch further off from Cape San Diego than is shown on the chart, vessels should be warned to give these rocks a wide berth in future.

5. Any remarks on the conduct of the master and crew or other circumstances connected with the case.

The officers and crew behaved well, both before and after ship struck, and seem to have done everything in their power under the circumstances. In coming to this conclusion the Court have before them and are greatly influenced by the appended report from Captain de Fragata Carlos S. Mendez, of the Argentine Navy and Sub-Prefect of Staten Island.

The Court is of opinion that William John Wade, second mate, was not at first giving his evidence in a satisfactory manner; he was then further cautioned he was on oath and to be careful; his subsequent evidence was given satisfactorily.

The Court is of opinion that Frank Hewson, first mate, gave his evidence in a very straightforward and satisfactory manner, and are of opinion did his best for the safety of ship both before and after she struck.

The Court think that great credit is due to the master for the good state of discipline shown by the behaviour of his crew, both before the vessel struck and up to the time of their leaving her.

That, having heard and carefully considered the evidence given before this Court, they are of opinion that the master committed an error of judgment, as above stated, and caution him to be more careful in the future, and he is so cautioned.

The expenses of the Court, 10*l.* 1*s.*, are approved.

(Signed) R. P. HUMPAGE,
Commander H.M.S. "Beagle,"
President of the Court,

ALFRED GRENPELL,
Her Majesty's Acting Vice-
Consul,

Members.

The court is of opinion that Frank Hewson, First Mate, gave his evidence in a very straightforward and satisfactory manner, and are of opinion did his best for the safety of ship before & after she struck

The official report of the wreck of *Crown of Italy*, and Frank's comments in his log on the court report and his role.

not only lose the investment they had made in their ship, but also in its cargo, so if there was culpability, it needed to be addressed to determine if any penalties were required, how they would be meted out and to whom. Often in the case of shipwreck, the logbooks and other key evidence might be lost, so the court would have to make their decisions based on eyewitness testimony.

The court Frank refers to here was held on March 25 and 26, 1892, in Montevideo, where the Sub-Prefect of Staten Island, Captain de Fregata Carlos S. Mendez of the Argentine Navy, took statements and sent his report to the Court back in England. The Court's one-page report explained their decision that, while there was no negligence or default of anyone, the "master committed an error in judgment in navigating his ship," by steering a course that "gave too slight a margin for clearing the rocks off Cape San Diego (taking into consideration the strong eddy current in the vicinity) between 6 to 8 p.m." and that this error of judgment "contributed to the loss of the ship."

In further notes on the conduct of other officers and crew, it was particularly noted that Frank Hewson had not done anything wrong: "The Court is of opinion that Frank Hewson, first mate, gave his evidence in a very straightforward and satisfactory manner, and are of opinion did his best for the safety of ship both before and after she struck." The Court also gave "great credit" to the captain for the "good state of discipline shown by the behaviour of his crew." In fact, the captain received only a caution to "be more careful in the future."⁸⁰²

There is a coda to Captain Greenbank's story: very soon after returning to England, he was given another ship, *Crown of Austria*, which was also shipwrecked due to an error in his judgment, again with his wife Jeanette and daughter Adeline on board.

Stuck on a sandbar, the crew all worked to try and shovel sand away to free, to no avail. The ship's carpenter was John McPherson, the great-grandfather of Martin Nisbet.

As Adeline's grandson Ross Munroe explained:

"Having lost 2 ships through navigation errors Captain Greenbank would not have got insurance for any future command. He died in Manchester a year later. The family story was that he died of a broken heart having been separated from his beloved ships and the sea. In fact, he died of a brain tumour and I can only speculate that the effects of the brain tumour may have contributed to his navigation errors."⁸⁰³

⁸⁰² *Court of Inquiry Report, Shipwreck of Crown of Italy*, March 26, 1892.

⁸⁰³ Emails. Dean Bray & Ross Munroe to Author. June 5, 2021.



Captain Greenbank (the only one without a shovel) supervises the ship's crew attempting to loosen the stranded *Crown of Austria* from the sandbar. Martin Nisbet's great-grandfather John McPherson is on the right, closest to the camera. Courtesy Martin Nisbet.



McPherson was the *Crown of Austria's* carpenter, as he was for the ill-fated *Crown of Italy*, and so crewed with First Mate Frank Hewson and Second Mate William Wade. Courtesy Martin Nisbet.

Chapter 36

Frank Gets Married

AFTER RETURNING IN APRIL 1892 from his harrowing shipwreck experience, Frank takes several more voyages. After working independently on sailing ships for more than thirteen years, he makes the transition to the new age of steam, joining the Pacific Steam Navigation Co. in 1894 and traveling the world as a merchant sea captain.

At some point, Frank meets the woman he will marry. It's possible he meets her somewhere in the neighbourhood, as their addresses are quite close to each other, but this is only speculation.⁸⁰⁴

Though we don't know the complete story of how Frank first encounters Amy Waters (daughter of Benjamin and Barbara Waters), we do know he seems to fall in love with her picture before he ever meets her. In a description of his career of voyages that he writes to her, Frank makes this confession:

“After arriving home I fully made up my mind to go into steam I applied for a berth in one of the large S.S. Co. & was promised the first vacancy that occurred whilst waiting one day Wm. Strong came & asked me if I would go 1st officer of a large sailing ship. I said I preferred to wait for a steamer. After talking it over with him & the wages being very good I accepted the berth & about three days afterwards saw you for the first

⁸⁰⁴ Amy lived at 1 Monk Street in Birkenhead. Frank lived at 31 Hamilton Square, less than a half mile away. One family historian suggested another scenario, but subsequent researchers have been unable to verify its details.

time, although I had seen your photo hundreds of times. I never used to go to Strongs without getting the Albumn [sic] & looking at you. So at last we meet. I joined the “Star of Russia” shortly after getting to know you & sailed from Cardiff for Cape Town about 14 days later as near as I can remember...”⁸⁰⁵

On June 19, 1899, Frank and Amy marry and spend their honeymoon at Betws y Coed, Wales. They are both thirty-three years old as they start their lives together on the cusp of the new century.



A postcard from this era from Betws-y-Coed.

805 *Voyage #11*. Frank Hewson Voyages. P. 44.

Chapter 37

The Turn of a Century, and a Generation

ON January 3, 1900, the new royal yacht *Victoria and Albert II* nearly tips over while being floated out of dry dock at Pembroke Dock for the first time.⁸⁰⁶ Perhaps it was some portent of what was to come in Britain's new century: a second Boer War, two World Wars, and other major conflicts to follow. But it was also to be a century of unprecedented transformation for Great Britain, as well as the rest of the world. As one senior historian for *English Heritage* wrote:

“The century produced rapid technological change: the internal combustion engine, aircraft, radio, television, and computers resulted in an intricately connected world. This connectivity fostered social and economic change, globalization, multiculturalism, urbanization, consumerism and huge benefits in living standards for many, and in better health and effective medicines in vaccines and antibiotics.”⁸⁰⁷

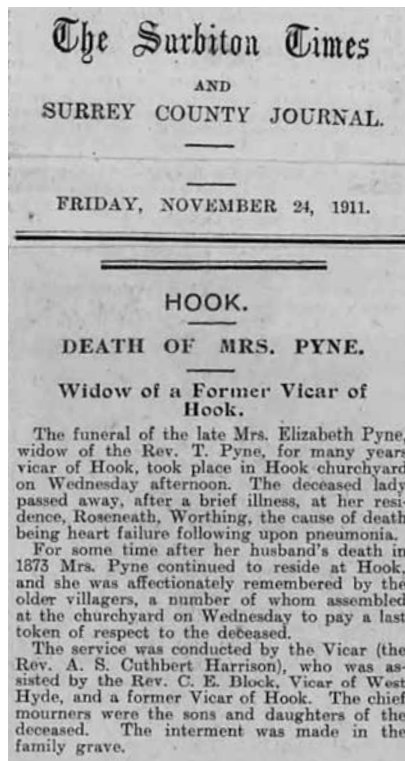
It is into this world that a new generation in the Waters line will be born. The first two decades would see the passing of the remainder of their forebears, beginning with sisters-in-law Barbara (Bake) Waters who dies on January 6, 1900, and Amy (Dakin) Waters who dies May 7, 1909.

806 *Pembroke Royal Dockyard. The History of Pembroke Dock*. Phillips, Lawrence. Found 5/28/22 at https://web.archive.org/web/20120207042402/http://www.pembrokedock.org/h_dockyard_2.htm.

807 *20th Century Glossary. Expert Advice*. Pattison, Paul. On English Heritage website. Found 5/28/22 at <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/learn/teaching-resources/teaching-history/teaching-20th-century/>.

After their sister Nancy's death at Pau in Southern France on July 5, 1901,⁸⁰⁸ Sarah and Jane return to England to live in Worthing. Their eldest living sister, Elizabeth (Waters) Pyne, would live for thirty-eight years as a widow at Pyne Cottage, Hook. After a brief illness, eighty-one-year-old Lizzie dies of heart failure following pneumonia on November 19, 1911.⁸⁰⁹ The widow of the former Vicar of Hook was herself buried in the Hook churchyard on November 22, 1911. Her obituary reads:

“For some time after her husband's death in 1873, Mrs. Pyne continued to reside at Hook, and she was affectionately remembered by the older villagers, a number of whom assembled at the churchyard on Wednesday to pay a last token of respect to the deceased...The chief mourners were the sons and daughters of the deceased. The interment was made in the family grave.”⁸¹⁰



The obituary of Lizzie Pyne from the *Surbiton Times*, dated November 24, 1911.

808 Waters Family Bible. Family tree. Handwritten note.

809 Elizabeth Pyne Obituary. *The Times*. November 21, 1911.

810 *Death of Mrs. Pyne. The Surbiton Times and Surrey County Journal*. Friday, November 24, 1911.

Sarah dies at age eighty on September 24, 1915, and Jane at age seventy-nine sometime in 1917.⁸¹¹

In a last-minute change to her will, Jane leaves one-quarter of her estate to each of her brother Ben's daughters Edith and May and two of the Pyne daughters, Julia, and Agnes. Edith, in particular, has been struggling financially since being left a widow with young children when her husband John Turvey died in 1898.⁸¹²

But it turns out that it was more of Agnes' doing than Aunt Jane's:

“Norman Turvey told me that Aunt Jane (1838-1917) in Italy had bequeathed all the money to an animal welfare institution, and when Agnes, ‘a big, domineering woman,’ heard of this she went storming out to Italy and persuaded her aunt to keep the money for Waters’ descendants and to consider the needs of Norman’s young widowed mother, Edith Turvey, and Edith’s unmarried sister May, who also got £905 each.”⁸¹³

For some unknown reason their other Pyne sister, Rosa, was not named a beneficiary. The total estate valued at about £4,000, would today have the purchasing power of nearly £300,000, or \$516,330 CAD. Therefore, each of the four cousins would have received the equivalent of nearly \$130,000 CAD.⁸¹⁴

During his elder years Benjamin is cared for by his daughters Edith and May. His grandson John Turvey recollects a vivid picture of his grandfather in his elder years:

“My Grandfather was a dear white-haired inoffensive old man of the gentlest disposition whose chief aim in the evening of his life was to be as light a burden as possible on his overworked daughters, who lay heavy on his mind. He would sit in an upright leather chair for most of the day with a small table at his elbow for meals & a fire screen to shield his face in case the fire ever broke into a flame, which it occasionally did, & to break the monotony he would set out on a daily walk in suburbia in his polished boots, cut-a-way morning coat and square block hat. I regularly carried his meals up to his room at this period & remember his partiality for fig jam at tea time, presumably for its laxative properties.”⁸¹⁵

811 *Globe and Laurel*. Journal of The Royal Marines. No. 241. Vol. XXII. November 7, 1915.

812 *Turvey: Faith and Persistence*. Turvey, Sheila. 2020. P. 38. Years earlier, it had been her brother Ben who had ensured that she and her other sisters received their inheritance from their father's estate.

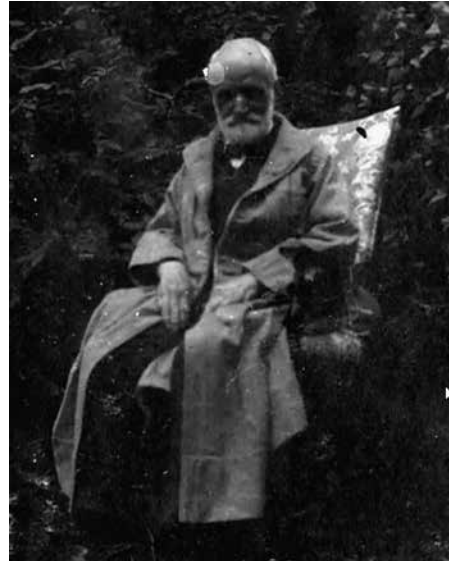
813 *The Waters Family, Volume IV*. Turvey, Shelia. P. 20.

814 Calculations performed 6/1/22 at www.xrates.com/historical.

815 *Family History*. Turvey, John. April 25, 1973. P. 1-2.



An image of Jane Waters from 1914, a few years before her death.



The final image of Benjamin Waters wearing his morning coat. Undated, likely between 1910-16.

The last of the Waters patriarchs, Benjamin Waters, dies on July 13, 1916, at the age of eighty-eight. He is buried at Floybrick Cemetery, Birkenhead, Cheshire, England.

From China to Birkenhead

Meanwhile, on a voyage to China around 1900, Frank Hewson purchases two vases as a present for his new wife, Amy. He captains merchant ships all over the world, but often going to Patagonia, Chile. He is hauling guano, just as Thomas Waters, Jr. had—not nearly so romantic as vases.⁸¹⁶

On January 13, 1901, their first child, named after Amy's mother, Barbara, is born at Birkenhead. The next New Year's Eve, second child Geoffrey is born, and they complete their family on June 23, 1905, with the birth of Brian.⁸¹⁷

Sometime after this, they all live in the Birkenhead house of Amy's sisters, widowed Edith Turvey and her unmarried sister May, who are running a school to earn a living.⁸¹⁸ Edith also has her two sons with her, John and Norman.

816 *Some Hewson Heritage*. Gosselin, Heather. As follow up to that, Heather wrote: "In fact, friends in Chile wanted Frank to bring his son Geoffrey and leave him there between voyages, but Geoffrey's mother declined their offer. Just think, we could all have been Chileans!"

817 This means that Amy has her children at a somewhat older age—she's thirty-four when Barbara is born, thirty-five when Geoffrey is born, and thirty-eight when Brian is born.

818 Amy, Edith & May will remain close throughout their lives.



Two Chinese vases given by Captain Hewson to his wife, Amy, about 1900. Their great-granddaughter, Margaret Hewson, now has them.



First page of Geoffrey Hewson's baby book.



Amy (Waters) Hewson with her daughter Barbara & newborn son Geoffrey. It is likely that husband Frank is away at sea.

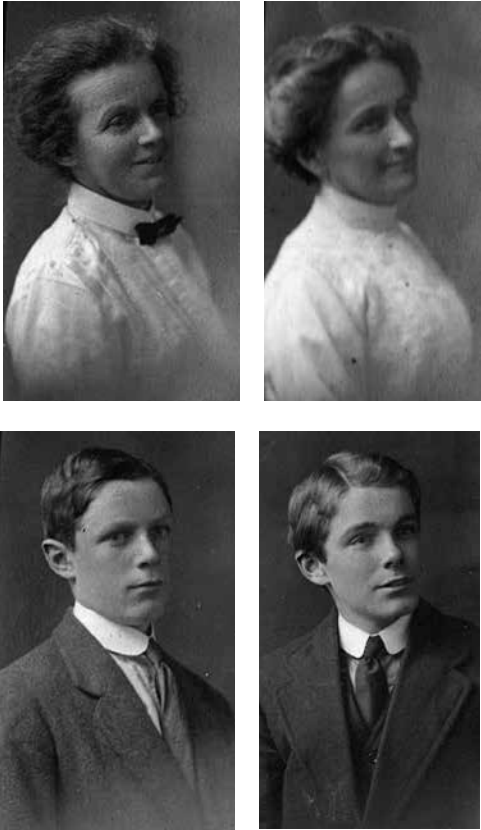


Portrait of a young Geoffrey Hewson.

John Turvey writes of this time of his aunt, cousins and his infamous and rarely seen uncle:

“It was always a great day when Captain Hewson returned from a voyage, if not with a parrot in a cage, at any rate with gifts for most of us acquired in foreign parts and on one occasion with an enormous bunch of green bananas to be strapped to the landing bannisters upstairs to ripen with agonizing slowness.”⁸¹⁹

819 *Family History*. Turvey, John. April 25, 1973.



The Waters sisters leaned on each other for support throughout their lives and lived in close proximity to each other, and even together at some times. May Waters (TOP LEFT); Edith Turvey (TOP RIGHT) and her sons Jack (BOTTOM LEFT) and Norman (BOTTOM RIGHT). 1914.



An image of Frank Hewson as a Captain made into a "Good Luck" postcard. Undated.

In 1913, after thirty-three years at sea, Frank Hewson retires and becomes a cargo inspector at the Mersey docks in Birkenhead.⁸²⁰

Geoff's role models

From a young age, Frank's elder son Geoffrey was interested in farming. He is at boarding school around the beginning of World War I in 1914, where in

⁸²⁰ *Passing of Capt. F. Hewson*. Obituary. Publication unknown. January 11, 1935.

addition to his father, he encounters the first of two important role models who would influence his future. The first was the school's gardener, Mr. Moss:

"The gardener at the school needed some help in the garden and I volunteered to help him. Part of that was because I could pick red currants and strawberries and other fruit while I was gardening. I could eat all I wanted to. That just suited me."⁸²¹

Geoff, who didn't much like school, left when he was fifteen. His parents supported him in his desire to learn about farming, making sure that a nearby farm was included in their summer seaside holidays, which led to a bona fide farm job for their son, and a second important role model:

"We would go to the seaside for six weeks, renting a cottage at Meols, which was about five miles from our home in Birkenhead. To get to Meols we took a horse cab.

"I got friendly with a farm boy there, Frank Royden. His father had a farm at Meols and all my brother Brian's and my time was spent at the farm. Well then, by the time I came to leave school, which I was very glad to do, Mr. Royden was selling his farm that Frank lived on, and he was going elsewhere. So he recommended me to his brother who lived near Darby, Leicestershire, which was a matter of about 75 miles away, I guess, and he arranged that I would go there.

"So I went there, it must have been about 1917 or 1918. I liked Mr. Royden very well. His farm was considered fairly big there, it was about 300 acres. Joe was a self-made man. He was raised on a farm, a very small farm. Then when he got to be about 18 he started to deliver coal and he delivered it with a wheel barrow around the village. Well then, he did all right and then he could afford a horse and cart. He kept working steadily and pretty soon he knew enough to apply for a farmer's job—to take over as a "rent a farm". He rented a farm locally and did all right. Later he got this farm where I was. He was then a man of about 65, somewhere in there.

"At this time there was a German prisoner of war camp located near Darby. Mr. Royden arranged to have some of the prisoners come to the farm with their guard, where he paid them a small wage to hoe turnips



Geoff Hewson, shortly before leaving England.

in the fields. The prisoners were friendly and some of them spoke some English, their noon meal was provided and we all ate in the farm house while the guard kept an eye on things.”⁸²²

Six years after his father’s retirement, and a year and a half after he has begun working at Mr. Royden’s farm, Geoff will be offered an opportunity to move to western Canada to follow his dreams and become a farmer. It will provide yet another major turning point in the Waters family story.

Chapter 38

Westward Bound in Canada

BACK IN NOVA SCOTIA, in fall of 1902, the Reverend (Rev) Cairns makes the bold decision to move from the Maritime's rocky shores to the rocky plains of western Canada, then called the Northwest Territories (N.W.T.).⁸²³

The preacher is called by the Superintendent of Missions for the Presbyterian Church, who persuades him that the move to western Canada as a missionary minister would allow him to offer his three sons a chance to become farmers if they wished. The Reverend is also influenced by his brother who has been in Alberta for some years and lures him with “glowing accounts of the rich soil and wonderful new country,” according to Bob Cairns. “My father had been brought up on a farm in P.E.I. and liked farming.”⁸²⁴

The Reverend also listens to friends from one of his Nova Scotia congregations who have moved to the Poplar Grove district and are farming there, the Archibalds, and, as Muriel Maxwell writes, “the call of the land began to possess Mr. Cairns and he moved his family to Langbank, Saskatchewan...”⁸²⁵

823 *History of Saskatchewan*. Found 5/24/21 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Saskatchewan. Parts of the N.W.T. Districts of Athabasca, Assiniboia and Saskatchewan would not be merged into the Province of Saskatchewan until 1905.

824 *Saskatchewan Archives Questionnaires, No. 2. Pioneer Experiences: A General Questionnaire*. P. 1.

825 *Old N.S. Rocking Chair*, Muriel Maxwell, Country Calendar section, *Pictou Advocate*, November 3, 1966.



The Cairns family at Barney's River, Nova Scotia, shortly before moving west.
Back row, L to R: John, Amy & Janet. Front row, L to R: The Rev., Tom, Alice & Bob. Undated.

Special Section

The Military Wardrobe of Major Thomas Waters

Introduction

This special section features sixteen pictures of surviving articles of clothing and accessories belonging to Thomas Waters Sr., who joined the Royal Marines in 1804. The artifacts were originally donated to the now-closed Royal Maritime Museum in Eastney near Portsmouth by Major Waters' great-granddaughter Barbara (Hewson) Mills, sometime between the mid-1950s and 1970s. As of the publication of this book, the National Museum of the Royal Navy's plan is to develop a new Royal Marines Museum at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, where Thomas Waters Sr.'s uniform artifacts will be housed.

This collection is incomplete; there are some pieces that presumably did not survive, for example trousers and boots and equipment such as an ammunition pouch, scabbard and sword. And there are pieces that have lost some of their trimmings such as lace, buttons, gold braid, or tassels. Amy (Waters) Hewson, the Major's granddaughter, later describes going through the pieces in the attic sixty years after his death: "We had been looking through old things. Grandfather's military cloak & coats & enormous hats surmounted with gold ornament & plume. Epaulettes (golden) worn on shoulders."¹

We have added some description and an image to present a fuller picture of what Thomas Waters' whole uniform likely looked like. There are also interesting examples of civilian wear, such as a smoking cap and a frock coat.

British Marines' uniforms underwent significant change in 1802 due to the designation of the Marines as "Royal." It appears there was a transition period. While most of the Major's gear is of the "Royal" design, vestiges of the pre-1802 changes are evident, such as the "shako" helmet, which was replaced post-1802 with the Round Hat, shown in the image.

Here's more detail on what the uniforms looked like following these changes:

"The dress of the Royal Marines had changed considerably in a few years.

Facings were changed to blue on 1 May 1802 as a consequence of the Marine

1 Letter. Amy (Waters) Hewson to son and daughter-in-law Geoff & Susan Hewson. August 8, 1940.



The Royal Marines from 1664 to 1896, by Richard Simkin. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

Corps being designated 'Royal.' The red coatee was now closed at the front and the tails shortened; the collar, shoulder straps and cuffs were blue; white lace with blue and red stripes set two-by-two extended from the buttons and buttonholes at the front, the pewter buttons featured a Foul Anchor with ROYAL MARINES above and a Laurel Wreath below. Vertical slashed pockets on the skirts of the coatee were decorated with white lace and the buttons were set two-by-two. White breeches, black gaiters reaching to the knee, or white overall trousers, with black shoes completed the uniform of the rank and file. Equipment consisted of whitened leather crossbelts for the black ammunition pouch and bayonet and scabbard. On the pouch flap was a brass star with the Royal Cypher in the centre surrounded by a Garter with the motto PER MARE ET TERRAM.² The Brass crossbelt plate carried a design of a Foul Anchor, with a crown and scroll inscribed ROYAL MARINES above it and a spray of laurel below.

Officers' facings changed from white to blue, and their lace from silver to gold. Epaulette straps and fringes were made of gold lace and wire... Officers' sword-belt plates were gilt with the Lion and Crown design on a square plate; the sword had a gold hilt, a gold knot, and a black leather scabbard with gilt mountings. A crimson silk sash was worn round the waist. Officers wore either the bicorne headdress or a superior quality round hat."³

- 2 Translated as "By Sea and Land," however, official sources list it as "Per Mare, Per Terram," which is the book's title, "By Sea, By Land." The Latin phrase symbolizes the Royal Marines' dual role as an "elite amphibious fighting force," operating both on board ships and ashore. It is believed to have been used for the first time in 1775 during the American Revolution. For more: <https://www.forces.net/news/mare-terram-royal-marines-motto-explained>.
- 3 Uniforms of the Royal Marines from 1664 to the present day. Charles C. Stadden & George & Christopher Newark. (The Pompadour Gallery, 1997, Essex, England) P. 70.

The Military Wardrobe of Major Thomas Waters



Forage Cap. In the 18th century, forage caps were small cloth caps worn by British cavalymen when undertaking work duties such as foraging for food for their horses. The term was later applied to undress caps worn by men of all branches and regiments as a substitute for the full-dress headdress. It is navy in colour with a wide red band and a red seam accent.

BY SEA, BY LAND



Red Coatee. A coatee was a type of tight-fitting uniform coat or jacket, which was waist length at the front and had short tails behind.



Boat Cloak. This navy cloak with gold buttons would have kept Thomas warm and his clothes dry on cold, windy decks and during storms.

The Military Wardrobe of Major Thomas Waters



Boat Cloak. With stand collar and a Navy button and chain to keep it around Thomas' neck.



Civilian Frock Coat. A formal coat cut at knee length with short tails in back.

BY SEA, BY LAND



Military Frock Coat. A formal coat cut at knee length with short tails in back, differentiated from the civilian version by gold buttons on front and cuffs.

The Military Wardrobe of Major Thomas Waters



Shako. A tall, cylindrical military cap, usually with a visor, and sometimes tapered at the top. It is usually adorned with an ornamental plate or badge on the front, metallic or otherwise; and often has a feather, plume or pompom attached at the top. On Thomas' shako, we see an anchor in the center of the ornamental gold plate on the front.



Neck Stocks. Though not required wear, neck stocks such as these brown velvet ones of Thomas', protected necks against the slashing of a sword.

The Military Wardrobe of Major Thomas Waters



Sashes. These deep crimson tasseled sashes would have been part of Thomas' ceremonial or full dress uniform.

BY SEA, BY LAND



Waistcoat. This grey wool lined waistcoat would possibly have been for "un dress," where its counterpart, the white waistcoat, would have been part of an officer's dress uniform.

The Military Wardrobe of Major Thomas Waters



Waistcoat. The white waistcoat with fabric covered buttons and stand collar would have been worn under the Military Frock Coat as part of the dress uniform.

BY SEA, BY LAND



White Coatee. Also part of the dress uniform, the double breasted chest is covered with two rows of fabric-covered buttons. Note the "T WATERS" imprinted on the back inside collar.

The Military Wardrobe of Major Thomas Waters



Smoking Cap. This brown velvet cap is topped with a brown silk tassel and was popular among Victorian gentlemen to keep their hair from smelling of smoke.

BY SEA, BY LAND



Spats. A shortening of the word "spatterdashes," spats are a type of classic Victorian footwear accessory for outdoor wear, covering the instep and the ankle and acting as spatter guards from rain, gravel, and mud.

The Military Wardrobe of Major Thomas Waters



Braces. This pair of light brown suspenders would have kept Thomas' pants up. We don't know what kind of pants he wore—breeches or long loose pants—both were part of an officer's get-up, and both would have buttons installed on the front and back waistbands to attach these braces.



Shoulder scales. Scales, or epaulettes, were attached to the shoulders of uniform coats and often defined the rank of the wearer. Decorated with the British crown and other symbols, the curved brassy metal pieces denote officer rank. Epaulettes were officially introduced by 1797. The epaulette style uniforms and insignia were modified slightly over the decades, until in 1856 Royal Navy officer insignia shifted to the use of rank sleeve stripes—a pattern which has endured to the present day.

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Section II

By Land

Introduction to Section II—By Land

A LITTLE OVER A CENTURY HAS PASSED since Thomas Waters Sr. was born, and his sons Thomas and Benjamin have grown and have their own families. At the turn of the twentieth century, Thomas Jr. and Amy Waters' daughter, Alice, is forty-five and living in Scotsburn, Nova Scotia with her husband, the Reverend J.A. Cairns, and their children. On the other side of the ocean, Ben and Barbara's daughter, Amy, is thirty-four and is raising a family with her husband, Frank Hewson, in Birkenhead, England.

It's from these two cousins and their husbands that the next generation will come. Here the story shifts from sailing ships around the world to a more familiar landscape, the prairies of Western Canada. A humble but adventurous preacher from Nova Scotia will take a giant leap of faith, moving his family from their comfortable home in the small Nova Scotian village to the rocky, untamed flatlands of southeastern Saskatchewan to live in a cramped sod house.

Regardless of fires, droughts and bitter winters, the Cairns family will break new ground and build Cairnbank, the farm near the community of Langbank which will become the heart of the family for the next one hundred years and beyond.

Through marriage and community cooperation beginning in the earliest days of the twentieth century, the Waters line will come to include the Hewsons, Cairnses, Coxes, Dickeys, Evans, Mills and Turveys. The Waters name itself does not carry on to the modern day and the only living Waters descendants descend through Tom Waters Jr. and Ben Waters; however, this lineage will create a large family that carries with it, even today, the values of its ancestors.



Poplar Grove & Area – Locations of Interest

1 Archibald Homestead—SE-28-13-2-W2.

Where early homesteader William Archibald, originally from Musquodoboit, Nova Scotia, built the first frame house in the area.

2 Simpson Homestead-Cairnbank Farmyard—

NW-18-13-2-W2. Homesteaded by Donald Simpson in 1885, this land was bought by J.A. Cairns in 1902. The Rev. & Alice built a house in 1912. In 1932, Bob & Elsie Cairns built another house in the yard. Owen & Hilda Cairns lived and farmed in this yard; later Jim & Ellen Cairns did the same.

3 Munro Homestead—Hewson Farmyard—

NW-16-13-2-W2. Duncan Munro emigrated to Canada between 1882 and 1884, taking up land here. The Munro farm was sold to Geoff & Susan Hewson in the 1930s, where they built a home and established a farmyard. In 1974, Robin & Dorothy Hewson also built a house here.

4 Jew Lake. Members of a Jewish colony planted trees on an island here that escaped prairie fires. John Dickey wintered cattle for William Archibald here in the late 1890s.

5 Montgomery School—Cowan Farmyard—

NE-16-13-3-W2. Established in 1886, it was attended by Bob & Tom Cairns. Amy (Cairns) Mulligan taught here, and Dave & Rosemary Cowan later lived and farmed on this location.

6 Woodside School—SW-34-13-2-W2.

A country school that operated in the Poplar Grove district from 1898 to 1960. Janet (Cairns) Dickey taught at Woodside and the Dickey, Cox & Hewson children all attended.

7 Gravener Farm—SW-29-13-2-W2. Notable neighbour Fred Gravener arrived in the Poplar Grove area in 1893 at the age of 17 where he worked for farmers and homesteaded *SE-33-13-2-W2*. Later he and his wife Hilda purchased the Gravener Farm where they lived and farmed.

8 Kirkbride's Shack—NE-17-13-2-W2.

Residence of eccentric bachelor and Hewson neighbour Walter Kirkbride, who originally worked for the Munros and later bought land from them and built himself a shack where he lived until he retired to the St. Hubert's home in the 1960s.

9 Lawkland Farmyard—SW-28-13-2-W2. John Dickey bought this land in 1896 and it became the site of the family home with Janet and children. John Dickey operated the Poplar Grove post office at this location from 1896-1910.

10 John Cairns Jr. Homestead—SE-12-13-3-W2. The Rev and Alice's eldest son, John Jr., homesteaded here in 1912, before moving to Teddington in northern Saskatchewan in 1929 with wife Elsie and family.

11 Poplar Grove Hall—SW-4-14-2-W2.

Location of the hall built in 1920. The Poplar Grove Community Club operated from 1919-1971. The hall was the location of dances, debates, card parties, wedding receptions, fowl suppers, Christmas concerts, plays, church services, anniversary parties, elections, municipal meetings, showers, picture shows and square dances.

12 Geoff & Brian Hewson's First Land—East Half of 15-13-2-W2. In the early 1920s Geoff & Brian Hewson began farming this land while continuing to live and work at Cairnbank.

13 "The Royal Alex"—SE-19-13-2-W2. In 1931, Harold Cox moved into a 12' x 14' frame shack built by John Hitchcock on land purchased from the Northwest Land Company christened "The Royal Alex."

14 Cox Farmyard—SW-20-13-2-W2. Harold bought this quarter, complete with house, from Jack Wrangham in 1935. Geoff & Susan Hewson had previously been renting the house from Jack Wrangham. Harold & Sadie lived and farmed here until they retired to Kipling in 1980.

15 Saint Paul's Anglican Church—NW-25-12-3-W2. Stone church built in 1938. Geoff & Susan Hewson are buried here.

16 Jim & Amaret Smyth Farmyard—NW-11-12-3-W2. Jim & Amaret Smyth lived and farmed here, building a new house in 1967.

17 Tom & Mary Hewson Residence—NW-22-13-2-W2. Tom & Mary Hewson resided here, building a new house in 1987.

18 Leonard & Rosemarie Hewson Residence—SE-36-13-2-W2. Leonard & Rosemarie Hewson resided here.

Chapter 1

The Railway Brings Settlers West

IN 1872, PARLIAMENT PASSED THE *DOMINIONS ACT*, and thus began a long and concerted effort by the federal government to settle Canada's west:

“The Government was anxious to have the west settled. First they had the land surveyed. All the odd [numbered] sections in each township were owned by the C.P.R. Two sections of each township were kept for school sections. The remaining sections were available for anyone who wished to homestead.

To qualify for a homestead which was one quarter section one must be at least eighteen and pay ten dollars. Then if he lived on the land at least six months of each year for three years and did some breaking the quarter was his.

The homesteading plan attracted many ambitious young men and women to our community for the years 1882-1884, settlers came from Ontario, Nova Scotia, France, England, Ireland and Scotland.”¹

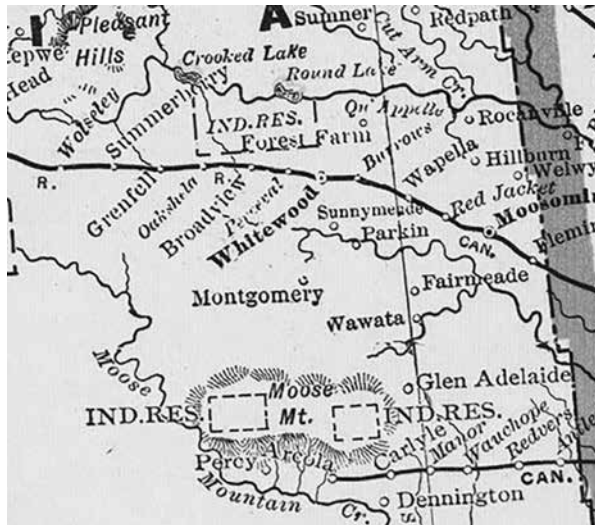
Settling new land was full of obstacles. The railways had not yet arrived; the only roads were trails made by the area's Indigenous peoples, so getting from anywhere east required work:

1 *Sunnymead District. Langbank Memories. 1984. P. 277.*

“Some of our earliest pioneers came before the railroads were built this far west. These came as far as Brandon by train, then they purchased a team of oxen and wagon and made their way west until they came to the land of their choice. The homesteaders who came in the fall of 1882 were able to come as far as Moosomin by train. The ones that came in 1883 came to Whitewood by train. If he had no oxen or wagon he would go by foot to locate his homestead.”²

The area the Reverend Cairns was called to was Silver Plains in what was then the Assiniboia region. The earliest pioneer families there were the Cowans, McDougalls, Lysters, Potters and Crosses. Arriving shortly after were the Archibalds from Nova Scotia,³ Bonars, Dermody, Dorrances, Shackletons, Husbands and Bill Taylor.⁴

By 1884, another thirty-five individuals or families had made their way to the settlement.

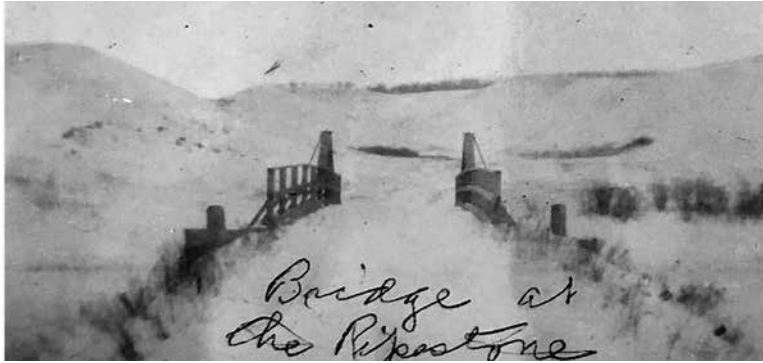


This map from 1901 shows what the territory Rev. Cairns moved into looked like at the time. Early communities were often named by those who first settled there. David Rumsey Map Collection, David Rumsey Map Center, Stanford Libraries. Licensed under a Creative Commons License.

2 *ibid.*

3 One of J.A.'s former parishioners from the Maritimes, William Archibald was a primary instigator of the Cairns family moving to Langbank and the Archibald family figured prominently in the early life of the Cairns family.

4 *List of Pioneers. Langbank Memories.* Potter, A.B., Potter, M. 1984. P. 2.



The bridge over Pipestone Creek. Early 1900s.

Those early settlers moved in over a “trackless waste, not too sure of where is the best place to cross the creek and progressing at a two mile per hour pace.”⁵ The creek was the Pipestone, carving through a steep valley, also called Pipestone.

Once arriving, the first two orders of business were making shelter and starting to grow food crops:

“Making a home was the settlers first work, this usually was a one roomed shack made of logs and plastered with mud. Often their needed furniture was made too, a table, cupboard, bedstead. Some brought furniture from their own first homes.

“They broke up a little land the first year. The earliest settlers did this with a walking plough and oxen, later horses were used...

“...Some grain, potatoes and garden vegetables were planted as soon as the soil was ready. When the barn was made the pioneer was ready to get a few animals, pigs, cattle and chickens, a cat was very much needed but they were scarce.”⁶

In 1885, Donald Simpson and a guide picked out land for a homestead, and just before a terrifying electrical storm two days later, he and his family erected a tent on the location.

The Simpsons met their nearest neighbors, the Potters, and soon raised a house located at NW-18-13-2-W2. Amaret (Hewson) Smyth, great-granddaughter of Alice and the Reverend Cairns, describes what would become the Cairns’ first house:

5 *Langbank District. Langbank Memories.* 1984. P. 1.

6 *Sunnymead District. Langbank Memories.* 1984. P. 278.

“Most houses were built of sod or had log walls with sod roofs. The barns were mainly underground sod buildings. Mr. Cairns’ own farm...had a house built into the side of a hill with the rear of the first storey covered by earth.”⁷

Additional details are provided by Donald Simpson’s son James:

“The house was very comfortable, cool in summer and warm in winter. A framework of poplars was first erected, then a two-foot wall of sod on the outside and the inside lathed with small poplar poles and plastered with white clay I found on the creek bottom. The roof was thatched with rushes from sloughs...that lasted over 25 years.”

Making the move

In 1902, the Reverend Cairns arrives alone in Silver Plains, a “broad and flat treeless area”⁸ twenty miles south of Whitewood. Alice and the children stay behind; they will follow the next spring, giving Alice the winter to plan and execute the move of the family and their belongings.

Meanwhile, the Reverend gets to work. He first buys five quarters of land and spends that winter with the Simpsons in the soddie.⁹ Amaret Smyth recorded: “J.A. purchased Sec. 18 and the NE 12-13-2-W2 from a Mr. Simpson (who named the Muffin¹⁰) and began farming...”¹¹

The Reverend borrows money for the mortgage from his brother Christopher, whose lawyer writes to make the transfer:

“I am desired by Christopher Cairns to send you draft for \$2500 payable by the Bank of Montreal to your order...

“As to the Mortgage you are giving to Christopher Cairns please have the same properly drawn and registered and send the mortgage or duplicate thereof and also abstract of title of the 640 acres included in the mortgage —to my address here.

7 *Reverend J.A. Cairns Life Story*. Smyth, Amaret. Undated.

8 *Langbank History. Langbank Memories*. 1984. P.2.

9 *ibid.* P. 92-3. The elder Simpson hadn’t been able to get used to life in Canada and returned to Scotland in the spring of 1903.

10 The “Muffin” was actually a body of water at the edge of the summer pasture. Cattle watered there, and the family used it recreationally. Margaret Hewson recalls “summer picnics at the Muffin.”

11 *Reverend J.A. Cairns Life Story*. Smyth, Amaret. Undated.

“The mtge will be for \$2500 for a term of from 5 to 7 years if you wish it that long—with int at 6 per cent payable yearly.

“Yours truly
John H. Bell.”¹²

The Reverend begins ministering on November 1, 1902, to congregations at Lansdowne, Golden Plain, St. John and Poplar Grove, an area of roughly 200 square miles that at this time had been settled only about fifteen years.¹³ Due to the difficulty of travel, his ministry work was as physically demanding as farming:

“The early religious leanings were toward Presbyterianism. With only trails or worse, travel between preaching points must have been on foot or horseback or at best later by horse and buggy...What courage and dedication these men must have had to brave the dangers and hardships of those times.”¹⁴

Grandson Owen Cairns would later describe the Reverend’s busy schedule:

“Grandpa did not have a parish as such but ministered at Poplar Grove, St. John’s, Golden Plain and Lansdowne as well as performing many baptisms and marriages in his home. At that time there were no fences between Poplar Grove and Lansdowne, and only about twelve houses of log or sod or a combination of the two. He travelled first by horse and buggy and later with the Model T. Ford...He also ministered at times in Langbank, and when the United Church of Canada came into being, he joined.”¹⁵

Among the communities that Rev. Cairns would serve in his earliest days was the village of Kennedy, where conditions were a bit different than today’s churches:

“One of the first religious services in Kennedy was held in the loft of the livery stable. The seats were planks resting on bunches of shingles, the pulpit made of boxes and the lighting system lanterns hanging from the rafters. A church was built and the opening service was held in December, 1907.

12 Letter. John H. Bell, Barrister, to John A. Cairns. March 17, 1903.

13 *Our Past*. Kennedy, Saskatchewan, Canada website. Found 5/23/22 at <https://www.angelfire.com/ca/kennedysk/>.

14 *ibid*.

15 *The Cairns Families and Cairnbank Farm 1902 to 1983. Langbank Memories*. Cairns, Owen & Hilda. 1984. P. 44-7.

Presiding minister was the Rev. J.A. Cairns of Langbank, and organist was Mrs. Arthur Huckerby. A regular minister was engaged at a salary of \$500 per year and a free house. Kennedy Union Church was the first independent church in Saskatchewan, the congregation later becoming a part of the United Church of Canada...¹⁶

Though we don't have evidence from existing materials, it is likely that the Reverend did his share of services in one-room schools and other locations in the various communities before the churches were built.

Westward, ho!

In 1901, the region that would four years later become known as Saskatchewan held a meagre 91,279 citizens. As many immigrants moved westward in the next decade, the 1911 population figure would catapult to 492,432—increasing the citizenry by more than five times.¹⁷ The primary reason for this phenomenal growth was the massive promotional campaign in 1905 that followed on the government's homesteading plan the previous decade:

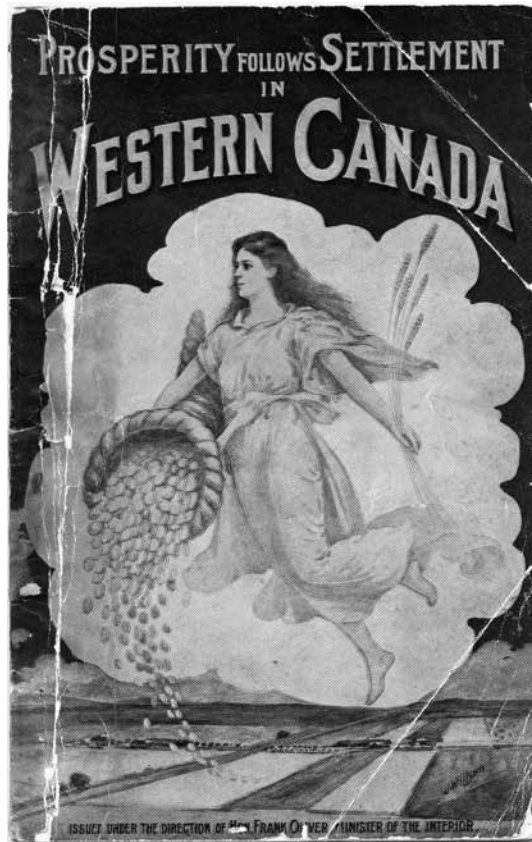
“Immigration was advertised in a massive campaign put forth by Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior in charge of immigration, (1896–1905) ... The railway brought life to settlements, which quickly grew to villages, and towns. Typically, many small communities sprung up 10–12 miles apart a distance easily travelled by horse and cart in a day.”¹⁸

Settlers from across Europe and the Canadian Maritimes boarded trains bound for the west, lured by the promise of a free quarter section of land. As a result, there was opportunity, and need, for ministers to settle as well. The Reverend Cairns would be one of those who would answer the call.

16 *Village of Kennedy: A History*. Owen, D.P. *Kennedy Reflections*. 1997. P. 139. The Methodist, Congregational and Presbyterian churches would unite in 1925 to become the United Church of Canada. The United Church would become important in the lives of Cairns' descendants.

17 *Historical statistics, population and population density per square mile*. Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0067-01. Found 6/16/22 at <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1710006701&pickMembers%5B0%5D=2.1&cubeTimeFrame.startYear=1901&cubeTimeFrame.endYear=1911&referencePeriods=19010101%2C19110101>.

18 *Canada's Most Wanted: Pioneer Women on the Western Prairies*. Rollings-Magnusson, Sandra. *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*. 2000 37(2): 223–238.



The cover of a promotional pamphlet extolling the glories of moving to the prairies. Produced by the Ministry of the Interior in 1905. Courtesy University of Saskatchewan Library Special Collections.

However, the promises in the promotions weren't always as advertised:

“Dramatic advertising campaigns promoted the benefits of prairie living. Potential immigrants read leaflets [that] painted Canada as a veritable garden of Eden and downplayed the need for agricultural expertise. Ads in *The Nor'-West Farmer* by the Commissioner of Immigration implied that western land was blessed with water, wood, gold, silver, iron, copper, and cheap coal for fuel, all of which were readily at hand. Reality was far harsher, especially for the first arrivals who lived in sod houses.”¹⁹

19 *Canada's Most Wanted: Pioneer Women on the Western Prairies*. Rollings-Magnusson, Sandra. *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*. 2000 37(2):223–238.

It was the railway that allowed the vast expanse of Canadian territory to be settled. The Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) connected Winnipeg to Calgary in 1883. This line was about twenty miles north of Silver Plains. It would be another twenty-five years before a rail line came to the area; Canadian National (CN) extended a line from Fairlight in 1908. Townsites developed around the rail stations, so the arrival of the CN line in 1908 reshaped the Silver Plains area.

Creating communities

The district names delineated an area or community. In the early years, there were districts with names like Montgomery, Sunnymead, Poplar Grove and Fairmede:

“...with the arrival of immigrants, their respective settlement, colony, village, or town received a name from the first arrivals to the area. The establishment of a post office became marked on early maps with the Canadian Post Office Name as did the early railway sidings and rail stations with the official railway name. The naming of post office or railway may alter the original settlement name.”²⁰

These names frequently replaced First Nations names, which often referred to the geography of the area. As their numbers grew, these communities or districts became economic, communication, religious and education centers. The districts that would eventually become Langbank were Brookside, Fairmede, Golden Plain, Montgomery, Sunnymead and Poplar Grove.

Communities banded together to form small school districts every four to six miles, often co-locating with post offices most often established a few years previously. For example, the Montgomery post office was established in 1884, and its School District #15 in 1886. The Poplar Grove post office came in 1895 and Woodside School District #402 was established two years later in 1897.²¹ Golden Plain's post office came later than its school district: the #70 School District was established in 1886, and the post office not until 1915.²²

20 *Introduction. Saskatchewan Maps.* Family Search.org. Found 5/24/22 at https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Saskatchewan_Maps.

21 A different name for the school district was required because another one in Saskatchewan was already named Poplar Grove. Woodside and Poplar Grove are used interchangeably to refer to the area.

22 *The Postal Services. Langbank Memories.* 1984. P. 234-5.

Silver Plains becomes Langbank

In 1908, the community of Silver Plains underwent a pioneer version of rebranding:

“The name was later changed to Langbank after the first big locomotive chuffed its way along the new rails to the townsite seven miles west of Vandura in 1908. This was the usual mileage between towns and considered a convenient distance for farmers hauling grain to the new elevators that were rapidly being built the instant a townsite was designated.”²³

The locals have a colorful story for the origin of the name Langbank. “This town should be called Langbank,” mused Scottish immigrant Duncan Munro,²⁴ who supplied feed for horses used in building the CN across Southern Saskatchewan in 1908. “That long bank to the north,” he said to the roadmaster, “reminds me of Langbank by Glasgow.” The rails had reached 1-13-3-W2, forty miles west of the Manitoba border, the designated spot for the next station. So Langbank it was.²⁵



Picture of early “Main Street” Langbank. Early 1910s.

23 *ibid.*

24 Duncan homesteaded what would eventually become the Hewson farm.

25 *It's a Dry Cold! You Don't Feel It!* Hewson, Edith. January 1, 1997. P. 1.

Two years later, on January 1, 1910, Langbank would finally get its post office, and School District #2765 would be established in 1911.²⁶

By 1913, Langbank would become a thriving farm-centered town with the British American elevator, the Security Lumber company, a general store with community hall above and a harness shop combined with the post office and a boarding house, and a blacksmith shop.

The Cairns family arrived in the pre-Langbank era; therefore their earliest letters are all postmarked ‘Poplar Grove.’

Planning to reunite

Back in Nova Scotia, Alice is attempting to sell some of the family belongings and pack the rest for the move west with John, Amy, Tom, and Bob. Janet would stay another year to complete her teaching responsibilities before joining her family out west.

Alice writes in February to update her husband on the progress:

“My dearest Man

“I got your “line” this afternoon. I think I can sell everything at private sales, and it is cash down. Mrs. D. Cameron has bought the extension table, & Mrs. Myra Robertson has spoken for the centre table and a crock to hold cream. John R. Chisholm wants the cart. DR does not want the cow as he bought one from Willie Bannerman when he went away but J.J. Irving will buy the cow I think. I have money enough to pay the insurance but it will leave me scarce, perhaps before it is due Mr. Reid will be along. I will send you the cheque to endorse. I do not like forged names. Janet will be paying me \$50. Soon too. But I expect I will need some of the cheque to buy the tickets. Anyway do you not want the money taken out of the bank and brought to you?

“...Janet is up at Mrs. J.W., making candy for a party to be held on Friday in John & Amy’s honour, because they are going away. Mr. R. Dewar said he would make me some nice strong large boxes to pack bureaus & sewing machine in. I hope he won’t forget. I wish you were here to help me get ready. Clarey Bell shingled the heads of the three boys Tom & Bob’s heads are like velvet.

26 *The Postal Services, Langbank Memories*, 1984, P.234-5.



Alice Cairns, before moving out west. 1900.

“I can get so little time for packing, the weather has been dreadful, cold snowy and all the heat in the house went up the chimney, but the storm to-day does not take everything up, so we are more comfortable. We have had a comfortable winter all told. Our fresh beef is nearly done but we have lots of pork & eggs...

“Write back as soon as possible so I’ll know you get this cheque all right. Just now I noticed an endorsed order of \$3.00 from E.A. McCurdy on the bank of Nova Scotia so I suppose I had better get it cashed when I get the rest.

“Your loving wife
Alice Cairns”²⁷

The following spring, in March 1903, Alice, now forty-eight years old, and four of their five children arrive by train to join the Reverend at Wapella, in the District of Assiniboia, about twenty-five miles from Cairnbank. Friends and relatives think it’s quite an adventurous thing to do, and they shower the family with food and gifts for the trip. They travel by “colonist car” on the Canadian Pacific Railway—a solution to transporting immigrants from the east coast out to where they could settle the Canadian west. They were the cheapest form of transport for immigrants who could only afford basic fares.

27 Letter. Alice Cairns to J.A. Cairns. February 17, 1903.

The fleet of colonist cars built in the late 1800s by Canadian Pacific grew to include more than a thousand cars which provided spartan pull-down sleeping berths and kitchens where immigrant families could cook their own meals. Fares were very cheap—a family could cross Canada from Montreal for seven dollars, but immigrants had to provide their own food and bedding. Blankets, pillows, and food all cost extra.²⁸

The nearly two-week journey is arduous, but also exciting, as described by Bob Cairns who was eight years old at the time: “We saw our first electric lights on the way out. We made some good friends on the train. My sister corresponded with a girlfriend she met on the train for years.”²⁹

When they get off the train there is nobody to meet them, so they sit on their trunks and suitcases until the Reverend arrives to take them to their new home. Then, it’s another tough trip of twenty-one miles by sleigh and cutter over “breaking-up roads” to the Archibalds’ (SE-28-13-2-W2), where they stay until the house can be set up. At one point the cutter upsets, and spills some of its occupants out onto the hard earth.

Alice and her four youngest children are met with a small sod home partially built into the side of a hill. John is now sixteen, Amy is fifteen, Tom is ten, and Bob is eight.

The soddie has boarded inside walls and a shingled roof. It is about twenty feet by twenty-four feet with two rooms downstairs and two upstairs. It has a small porch, about eight feet by twenty feet at the east end of the kitchen. The floors are wood, which Alice covers with hooked mats made in Nova Scotia in the sitting room and bedrooms. The house is heated by a cookstove and a tin heater and is lit by kerosene lamps and candles. A small cellar with an earthen floor could be reached through a door in one wall of the kitchen and down a few steps.

Due to the previous “rather careless housekeepers,” the new owners encounter some unwelcome critters on their arrival, as son Bob Cairns recalled many years later:

“We move in, the spring of 1903...and the house was infested with bedbugs. We organized bedbug hunts—the bugs came out at night and crawled across the ceiling and walls. By putting a lighted kerosene lamp

28 *Colonist car*. Found 6/12/21 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colonist_car.

29 *Saskatchewan Archives Questionnaires, No. 2. Pioneer Experiences: A General Questionnaire*. Cairns, Bob. 1952. P. 2.

under them, they fell into the lamp and were killed. My father also painted all the cracks in the walls and ceiling with kerosene. We got rid of the bugs in one summer.”³⁰

Once a year during spring melt, the house floods, so the family mops up the water as it runs in and carries it out in pails. Sometimes they bore holes in the wood floor and let the water soak away into the earth under the building.³¹



An early picture of the Rev. and Alice Cairns with guests in front of the soddie.

30 Saskatchewan Archives Questionnaires, No. 9. Pioneer Housing. Cairns, Bob. 1955. P.2.

31 *ibid.* P.6.

Chapter 2

Alice Becomes a Prairie Farmwife

“It was a life of hard, persistent work—of loneliness, privation, and hardship. But it was also a life of courage, of health, of resourcefulness, of a wild, exhilarating freedom found only in God’s open spaces.”

— ROBERT J.C. STEAD, *The Homesteaders*³²

ALICE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A STRONG WOMAN, and her move to the Prairies is just a new challenge for the mother of five. She is unusually equipped for this kind of move, having traveled around the world with her parents as a child, and moving several times with her husband to relocate in Nova Scotia. Balancing the hardships was the excitement of coming to a new territory; to be part of building something that hadn’t existed before. It was just the kind of challenge Alice had all the tools for.

When things get bad, as is often the case, it is Alice who bucks the family up. As son Bob writes, “More than once when some disaster overtook us, it was she who gave us courage to go on and made a joke of our misfortune. One of her rhymes was, “Hailed and frozen and rusted, and yet we are not busted.”³³

This one rhyme with its courageous humour may sum up the vast, yet underrated, contributions of the prairie farmwife in the early days of the 1900s:

32 A novel of the Canadian West published in 1916 by The Musson Book Company Limited. Found 6/20/22 at <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/28579/pg28579.html>.

33 *Saskatchewan Archives Questionnaires, No. 2 Pioneer Experiences: A General Questionnaire*. Cairns, Bob. 1952. P. 1.

“Wives played a central role in settlement of the prairie region. Their labour, skills, and ability to adapt to the harsh environment proved decisive in meeting the challenges. They prepared bannock, beans and bacon, mended clothes, raised children, cleaned, tended the garden, helped at harvest time, and nursed everyone back to health. While prevailing patriarchal attitudes, legislation, and economic principles obscured women’s contributions, the flexibility exhibited by farm women in performing productive and nonproductive labour was critical to the survival of family farms, and thus to the success of the wheat economy.”³⁴

Life on the farm can be brutal

Alice describes the many challenging rigours of life in the Canadian prairie at the turn of the twentieth century in her letters from 1908-1924, often with her signature wit at hand.

The life of the prairie farmwife is filled from dawn to dusk with tasks: keeping the family and farmhands fed; gardening, sewing, mending and washing the clothes, looking after the small children and cleaning the house. Older children are out in the fields with the men when needed or helping their mother in the house with chores.



Harvest is a family affair. The prairie wife’s role was to keep the crew fed every day – all without any modern conveniences. This image of harvest at Cairnbank is from the early 1900s.

It’s likely that some of the pioneer ways seemed almost barbaric to Cousin May, who lives on the other side of the ocean in relative urban comfort, in a home with domestic help. Take for example Alice’s description of the grim methods used to keep away wolves,³⁵ who would eat their chickens:

34 *Canada’s Most Wanted: Pioneer Women on the Western Prairies*. Rollings-Magnusson, Sandra. In *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*. 2000. 37(2): 223-238. Found 6/16/22 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Saskatchewan#cite_note-37.

35 The family often refers to the coyotes as “wolves.”



Though Alice is very pragmatic about the farm livestock that will eventually appear on the family's table, she also has a soft spot for them, often naming them. Here she keeps a friendly eye on a turkey. 1920s.

"I had an invalid hen, she had a swelled head—roup.³⁶ Tom begged for her, so Bob caught her, Tom killed her, then cut little holes in her flesh, put strychnine in those slits, tied a rope to her legs, got on horseback and dragged her up to a straw stack nearly a mile away (still on our land) put the poisoned bird up on the stack where he saw wolf tracks. A day or two afterwards he went up again on old Nellie (the oldest horse we have) and found a large wolf stark and stiff, the hen was gone."³⁷

Life in Saskatchewan is a far cry from May's more civilized existence in England, and Alice often points this out to her, as in this description of trying to keep a log house clean:

"You say a house in the town is so difficult to keep clean, I wish you could be in a log house on the prairie for a while! Dust is just dreadful!

36 Roup is Infectious coryza, which is also referred to as a cold, is caused by the bacterium *Haemophilus paragallinarum*. This disease primarily affects chickens. Found 6/3/21 at <https://poultry.extension.org/articles/poultry-health/common-poultry-diseases/infectious-coryza-in-poultry/#:~:text=Infectious%20coryza%2C%20which%20is%20also,pheasants%20may%20also%20be%20affected.&text=The%20disease%20can%20also%20be,are%20brought%20into%20the%20flock..>

37 Letter. Alice Cairns to May Waters. February 21, 1908. P.1.

and then the fine black earth like ashes to sift over everything, like the sand used to get in your clothes hanging out in Hoylake. Tuesday of this week John and Clifford (the hired man) skinned the wolf in the kitchen (in the evening) that made a dark spot on the kitchen floor. Then I had a beef's head and a liver brought up from the granary put in a holey pan, and set on the kitchen floor, so they might thaw. They thawed and the blood leaked out and made a dreadful mess, they took two days to thaw. John cut up the head and got the tongue out, and I boiled up head, liver and a diseased hare for the hens. Then the men tracked in manure and earth (we have very little snow this winter) and to cap all, John cleaned the range for me! You cannot imagine such a dirty floor; of course, I washed up some of the blood."³⁸

Alice's laundry routine is a bit different from ours today as well—especially in the winter:

“I have to leave *my* wash out all the week to dry as everything freezes so stiff, then when things limber up, Bob brings them in, and I hang them up in the room over two rough boards standing up against the end of the organ next the box stove which protect the organ from the heat. There are nails in the logs on the ceiling in our room, and sometimes there are 4 guns laid up on them. I suspend our laundry all around the room sometimes when they won't dry outdoors. It looks funny, I try to disguise the nature and form of some of the articles.”³⁹

Pioneer women had to be very organized and efficient to get all the cooking, cleaning, laundry, dishes, and child-minding done in a single day. The descriptions of Alice's twelve-hour days read like torture in today's world of mechanization and convenience. She tells of scrubbing laundry in washtubs for two to five hours, melting ice for the washing because both the well and slough waters are “very alkaline.”⁴⁰

She cooks or bakes nearly every day; some days, all day—everything from scratch, of course—up to fourteen loaves of bread at a time, half a dozen pies, cakes, potatoes, baked beans, doughnuts, porridge... She describes preparation of one Saturday dinner:

38 Letter. Alice Cairns to May Waters. February 21, 1908.

39 *ibid.*

40 *ibid.*



Alice poses for the camera, later penning her own wry caption. 1910s.

“I’ll get Papa to bring me up a nice roast from the granary, get Bob to bring up a pail of suet, then I’ll make two suet puddings, one with black currants one with gooseberries, (some like the one and some the other), then I bake the meat, steam the puddings, boil turnips and potatoes, make a good gravy with onions, that is our usual Saturday dinner when Janet, Tom and Bob get their only hot dinner in the week...”⁴¹

More work follows dinner, and it really grates on the nerves (even with a dose of humour) if others aren’t paying attention:

“After dish washing Janet sweeps every room and the porch, then we scrub the kitchen floor; then we scold everyone who puts a foot on it till it dries, most of the scolding falls on Papa and Tom, they seem to lose their wits and wander all over the floor, in an absent minded aimless way, looking for a hammer or a boot or a needle which are never in the kitchen anyway...”⁴²

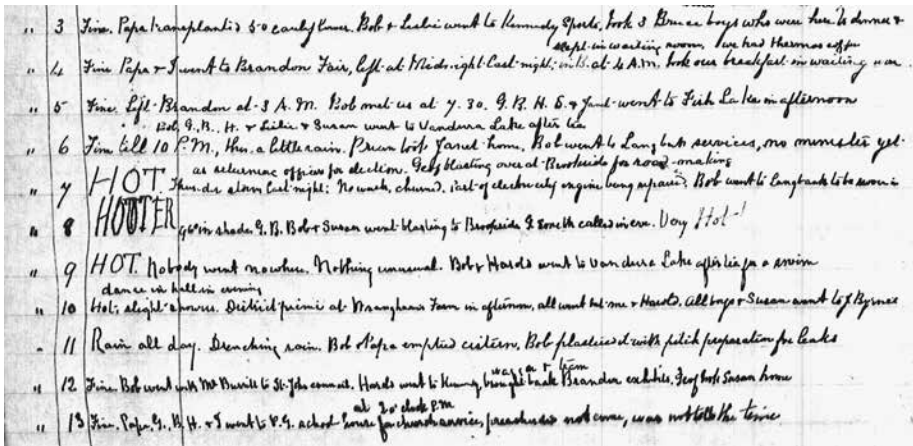
41 *ibid.*

42 *ibid.*

The house has only two bedrooms—one for the women and the other for the men, so everyone takes turns getting ready to go anywhere. After breakfast on weekdays, a typical day might go like this:

“I do the dishes, set the fire in the room, sweep the room and kitchen, go get another tub brought in and set on chairs, put my white clothes in a third tub in the porch and then I rub, rub, rub from 2 to 5 hours according to the size of the wash. I give the men only soup or something easy, the first man who comes in the house at dinnertime has to set the table and take up the dinner, and I rub, rub, rub. I hang the clothes on the hay-rack and on the various pieces of farm machinery with which the field behind the house is strewed. Papa or John empties the tubs, then I tidy up the kitchen, do the beds and upstairs work, wash and tidy myself, get the tea, then drop down exhausted in the most comfortable chair in the room, a chair my father bought for my mother the last time he was home. On Wednesday or Thursday I bake about twelve or fourteen loaves of bread. On Tuesday I bake pies or fry dough-nuts, or make a large white loaf-cake, which Janet will ice with a fudge icing...”⁴³

The weather is always a factor in prairie life. Summers can feature brutally hot spells. One July, Alice writes, in uncharacteristic large all-capital letters: “HOT...HOTTER...HOT. Nobody went nowhere.”⁴⁴



Alice Cairns notes a hot spell in her diary of otherwise tiny writing, 1930.

43 Letter. Alice Cairns to May Waters. February 21, 1908.

44 Diary. Alice Cairns. July 7-9, 1930.

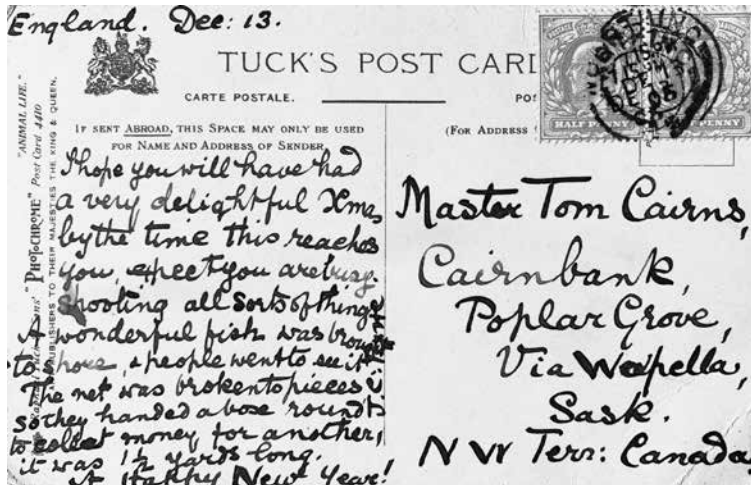
Conversely, the frigid cold of the prairie winter affects their lives for up to half of each year. In a letter to Alice's uncle Ben Waters in England on January 12, 1911, J.A. writes, "I heard a man the other day saying that it was so cold that his words "broke off in chunks like icicles and fell to the ground." It is wonderful how cold it can be out here and yet the people don't mind it much."⁴⁵

45 Letter. John A. Cairns to his uncle-in-law Benjamin Waters. January 12, 1911.

Chapter 3

Pioneer Children Face Fires & a Bull

IT ISN'T ONLY THE REVEREND AND ALICE who have to make a big adjustment from the Maritimes to the Prairies of course—the children also experience a big life change. In 1906, the eldest Janet is in Nova Scotia—fortuitous for history, because family letters to her give us a colorful picture of the Cairnses' new life.



The family receives mail from Nova Scotia and abroad. Young Tom Cairns receives this postcard from his mother's cousin Julia Pyne in England at the end of 1905. It is addressed to "Poplar Grove" and shows the brand-new designation of "Saskatchewan."

Before John, Tom and Bob can go to school in the mornings, they need to feed and water the hens, milk a cow, feed a calf and three pigs, and harness the horse for the buggy. Then there are chores after school until supper. When school isn't in session, they are kept busy helping their father and the farm hands with the farm work.

In the winter of 1906, Alice writes to Janet a humorous “chapter of accidents”:

“John has a boil on his (ahem) which makes sitting down a painful act. He walked up to F. Gravener’s to-day to get some of that wonderful salve F.G. was telling us about; the place of the boil made it too painful to ride on horseback...February 14th Wednesday. Tom went to school to-day, the first time since you left. He lit the candle this morning after the sun was up and forgot to put it out, it was burning away till 2 o’clock...we are having our coldest weather now. John broke the little kitchen looking glass that Annie Thompson’s mother gave to Amy, it was a pure accident. Tom broke a lamp chimney this evening. I put a nice pot of meat out in the porch to cool on Sunday, with a big tin on top, those wretched dogs knocked off the tin and took the boiling meat out, I hope they burned their noses and tongues. I have just mixed bread and I feel tired and out of sorts, hence this chapter of accidents.”⁴⁶



Cairns children Amy and Bob soon after their arrival at Cairnbank. Bob is reading a book. Early 1900s.

46 Letter. Alice Cairns to Janet Cairns. February 11, 1906.



Tom with a dog, and cows in the background. Early 1900s.

A rare letter from Tom to his sister illustrates some of the children's activities:

“Papa went into town Wednesday and brought back a Winchester Repeating rifle and I fairly danced. The only thing that is wrong with it is that the shells cost 5 cents apiece. I was away at school to day and a half a dozen prairie chickens came along and sat on the wood pile and Bob got fumbling around with the gun and he did not know how to load it. Two wolves came around today but of course I was away or I would have used the new rifle on them. I am up to them at school in Algebra and almost all the other things. We had Geometry (Examination) to day. I guess I came out pretty well for the only thing I know I had wrong was Define an Isosoles [sic] triangle I said it was a triangle with 3 equal sides and it only has 2 equal sides Bob has got a bad cold and he is trying the staying in cure. Reggie and I got fooling with the bull & I got Reggie to ride him. Reggie would not get on him at first but at last he did try. He Reggie threw himself across the bulls back. The bull tried to buck but he could not so he began hitting at Reggie with his horns. Reggie did not look over his shoulder (hadn't time) but joined me on the other side of the wire fence and then we quit experimenting with the bull Hoping that a wolf comes along tomorrow and I see him.

“I remain

Yours truly

T.C.C. (Ha ha)

XX
XXXXXX”⁴⁷

47 Letter. Tom Cairns to his sister Janet Cairns. March 9, 1906.



Hijinks with a hog...J.A. and one of his sons move a pig. Early 1900s.

In the early spring, J.A. lets Tom harrow, there are frightening prairie fires, never-ending chores, and community activities:

“Papa let Tom harrow yesterday for the first time, with three horses too, but the quiet trio, Prance, Jimmy, & Fly. Tom had to stay home from school to-day to harrow, but he will go to-morrow if nothing happens. A prairie fire was descending on us this afternoon from above Wilson’s, (set by a Frenchman, who seems to live north, south, east & west) Wilson, Potter & sons, Cairns & sons, and Mathie contributed their united energies in keeping it back, with ploughing guards, and burning guards, it did not cross the township guard above the ploughed fields...Papa, John & Bob are out burning a fireguard between here & F.G.s Tom has just finished milking, and I have got my bread set. I washed a good big washing yesterday, there was a fearful wind but I hung the clothes out in the evening when it was calm. Amy was not responsible for the St. John social, but she helped... Prairie fires have completely fireguarded us. Dermody’s fire went around easterly to Ferguson’s. The Sunday Aunt Jennie came, Savages’ house burnt up. Dermody’s fire burned up Mr. Bruce’s buildings. Papa was pickling wheat till twelve last night,⁴⁸ John will begin seeding to-day...I forgot to tell that Dermody’s let the last fire get away from them, while burning stubble. Bruce will have some slight revenge in making them pay damages...”⁴⁹

48 “Pickling wheat” refers to treating it with Formalin (formaldehyde) to kill smut, a fungus.

49 Letter. Alice Cairns to Janet Cairns. April 21, 1906.

In the “overpoweringly sultry warm” summer, a letter describes the family’s attendance at the Poplar Grove picnic, the removal of an “ulcerated tooth” of Alice’s, and Amy taking music lessons: “Amy has taken one music lesson from Miss. B. Smith, and expects another to-morrow morning. She has practiced faithfully, but thinks fancy work would be more profitable.”⁵⁰

In this letter, Alice hints that her eldest daughter may soon return to Saskatchewan:

“Mrs. Archibald was there and her news was that Archie Gillis is to be married in about a month, and that you were hurrying home to take charge of that new school near Wwood. Miss Yorke has resigned and they want you to take Poplar Grove school...Our green peas will be in their prime when you come if we do not get hailed out...Mrs. Dean says if you should take Poplar Grove school you could board with her; I told her that would be an inducement, but that I was prejudiced [sic] against Poplar Grove school.”⁵¹

50 Letter. Alice Cairns to Janet Cairns. July 27, 1906.

51 *ibid.*

Chapter 4

Friends & Neighbours

EARLY PRAIRIE SETTLEMENTS WERE SMALL, sometimes numbering only a handful of families and the odd few individuals. Some were men who came out to homestead before bringing out their families; others were bachelors who settled there for one reason or another. These collections of folks came to rely heavily on each other for community. When there was a major life event, such as a birth or a death, the whole area knew, celebrating or grieving accordingly. When one neighbour suffered, others came to their aid. When a visitor showed up around mealtime—whether friend, neighbour, worker, or stranger—it was assumed he or she would join the family at the table.

One frequent and colorful friend and visitor to Cairnbank is Fred Gravener. Another transplant from England, Fred had come to Canada in 1893 at seventeen years of age and first worked for William Archibald, who built the first house in the Poplar Grove district. In 1896 Fred had homesteaded the SE-33-13-2-W2.⁵² In 1910, young Tom Cairns works for him during harvest, gathering up spilled grain and helping haul grain to the railway.

During this time, Fred visits Cairnbank often. He is known for his great entertainment abilities, especially singing and storytelling.⁵³ He is also known for something else—his girth.

52 *Frederick William Gravener 1876-1943. Langbank Memories.* P. 323.

53 Interview with Jim Cairns. Hewson, Margaret. September 11, 2021.



Fred Gravener on one of his many visits to Cairnbank. 1910s.

Alice Cairns mentions Fred in numerous letters to her Cousin May, always with an affectionate touch of humour. In the winter of 1908, she writes:

“Fred Gravener has not been down to see us since the evening I began this letter. I think he will come on Saturday. How I wish I could give you a picture of him in his fur coat, a pair of feet and the top of a cap showing! He is only equalled in ludicrousness by my appearance when I go for a long drive in the winter. I wear a man’s fur overcoat over my own fur coat.”⁵⁴

At Christmas in 1909, she explains why Fred won’t be gracing their house on that holiday:

This Xmas we did not have any English “boys.” F. Gravener frankly told me that there were more young ladies east (we live west of him) and he was going to Mr. and Mrs. Stokes because sometimes the widow McLean’s daughter was there (she is tall and slim, while F.G. is shorter than I, and somewhat heavier); however he did not go there and did not meet the young lady.”⁵⁵

54 Letter. Alice Cairns to May Waters. March 17, 1908.

55 Letter. Alice Cairns to May Waters. February 24, 1909.



Alice and the Rev. bundled up for a prairie winter. Alice sports her “man’s fur overcoat” and muff. 1910s.

Fred farms until 1916, when he rents his farm and returns to England. There, he marries Hilda Snelling in May, and sails back to Canada with his bride in August. In 1921, they buy a quarter of land, SW-29-13-2-W2, and live there until Fred’s death in 1943. Fred and Hilda have four children, one of whom, also named Hilda, would later marry the Reverend’s grandson Owen Cairns.

The bachelors

A small cadre of unmarried men in the community were described this way in the Langbank Memories history book:

“The prairie batchelor [sic] is ubiquitous to the history of the early days, and four of such men, hillside philosophers all, Will Marks, Walter Kirkbride, Alex Smith and Tom Dunne lived near each other in the district bordering Langbank and Poplar Grove during the first fifty years of the century.”⁵⁶

Each of these men has his own quirks, and at some point, they are all referenced in Alice Cairns diaries and letters.

56 *Prairie Bachelors—Marks, Kirkbride, Smith and Dunne. Langbank Memories. 1984. P. 32.*



The “courtly” Tom Dunne’s one-room shack. 1923.

Alex Smith comes from Ontario sometime during the First World War. He is interested in purebred Clydesdale horses and breeds them on his farm. His most prized possession is a set of encyclopedias which he constantly read and rereads. He is described as “more than fair” over fences, a source of much trouble among farmers.⁵⁷

Tom Dunne, a “mousy little man,” came from Ireland to Canada in 1904. He buys land east of the Duncan Munro’s in Poplar Grove and lives in a one-room shack. His chickens wander in and out of his door, roost on the end of his bed and eat off his table. However, his manners are “courtly,” and he is respected by his neighbours.⁵⁸

Perhaps the most intriguing of the four bachelors is Walter Kirkbride, born in Scotland, orphaned early in life and brought up by an uncle. Having developed tuberculosis, he was advised to emigrate to Canada. He comes to Duncan Munro’s also in 1902 and works for them for many years. He buys some land west of the Munros where he builds himself a shack.

57 In the early '30s he would help young Geoff and Brian Hewson with plowing instructions and fencing.

58 *Prairie Bachelors—Marks, Kirkbride, Smith and Dunne. Langbank Memories.* 1984. P. 32.

A neighbour first of the Reverend and Alice, Kirkbride could be counted on to show up for meals and long evenings. Alice Cairns writes in her diary of one visit from the strange man: “Kirkbride to tea & to an endless evening.”⁵⁹

Later, he would become a neighbour of Geoff and Susan Hewson⁶⁰ when they build across the road from him and would spend many evenings in the Hewson home. Leonard, Geoff and Susan’s son and J.A. and Alice’s great-grandson, describe Kirkbride as being among his earliest memories of neighbours, because he was “the most rememberable”:

“When Kirkbride was around things always seemed to go wrong. He must’ve lost a quarter section; he put a shack up on it and my father bought it [the land], but Kirkbride continued living in his little shack just across the road. Every day he’d come over go fill up a pail with water from our well, and that pail would last him the whole day.

“He was an educated man, but he lived like a hermit. He lived on practically nothing. Oatmeal, and he had a garden. We went to his house, and it had a certain Kirkbride smell about it. He had a woodpile and he gathered up dead wood all summer, which he burned all winter in his stove. The extent of his modern conveniences was a battery-operated radio and twice a year he’d have to get new batteries. He had a little aerial outside his house to get reception.”⁶¹

A morose unlikeable fellow, Kirkbride could become very excitable, and at times his language would become profane. Geoff Hewson would say, “Enough of that talk, Walter! Out you go!” Kirkbride never held a grudge and would be back the next day.⁶²

Even today Kirkbride holds legendary status in the annals of family stories.

59 Diary. Alice Cairns. November 29, 1930.

60 Geoff is Frank Hewson’s son and Susan (Dickey) Hewson is Alice and J.A.’s granddaughter.

61 Interview with Leonard Hewson. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.

62 *ibid.* P. 33.

Chapter 5

The Treeless Tundra

IN WINTER AND IN SUMMER, there is one commodity a prairie household cannot survive without—wood. And because there isn't much around Cairnbank, traveling to Moose Mountain, where the poplars and other trees are plentiful, is necessary. This would have required a round trip of about thirty miles. This means that a great deal of time and effort are expended on traveling to get wood, cutting wood, loading wood, traveling back with wood, and finally, preparing wood to be used in the heating appliances of the time.

There is only one way to keep an early home warm against the bitter cold of long Canadian prairie winters, and that is the wood fire. The primary wood stove is usually located in the kitchen, and it serves as both a cooking and home-heating appliance. The fire needs to be stoked day and night to melt snow for bathing, cooking, and drinking water; to cook food, and to provide heat not only during the day, but through the night as well in winter.

To keep a fire stoked twenty-four hours a day, day after day, requires a constant supply of chopped wood. But in the early 1900s, the southeast area of Saskatchewan is mostly devoid of trees because frequent prairie fires have swept the land clear. Many of these fires are accidentally started by humans—native peoples and settlers alike; some were the result of lightning igniting dry vegetation.



The winter wood stockpile at Cairnbank. 1910s.

Bob Cairns recalled the family's experiences with fires:

“We had some very thrilling prairie fires in the early years. I thoroughly enjoyed the excitement of fighting fire, armed with a wet sack, or a bunch of green willows, about 2 feet long. The prairie around our new home had been recently burned over when we moved from Archibalds, and I can still remember the pungent smoke-smell, mixed with fresh-earth odors, and green tender grass blades poking thru the black ashes on the prairies. And the gophers were there in thousands. We snared them with a noose on the end of a string. That was another thrill, when I caught my first gopher.”⁶³

The oasis of trees in the otherwise bare landscape of southeastern Saskatchewan is located near Moose Mountain, twenty miles south of the district of Poplar Grove (named for those trees), and Cairnbank Farm. Hauling wood for fuel and building supplies is difficult for the early settlers, since obtaining wood meant making long trips to the upland.⁶⁴ But it is necessary, and so it becomes a part of life for the Cairns family. Bob Cairns recalled those days:

63 *Saskatchewan Archives Questionnaires, No. 2 Pioneer Experiences: A General Questionnaire*. Cairns, Bob. 1952. P.3.

64 *Cannington Manor, An Early Settlement Community in Southeastern Saskatchewan*. Enns-Kavanagh, Kristin M. University of Saskatchewan. Fall 2002. P. 10.

“They [my parents] had their share of hardships. We had a heavy snow-storm on September 12, 1903, 40 acres of our first crop was flattened by snow and had to be cut one way..The job of hauling wood for the first few years was hard, we had to go 18 miles to get wood any size. Also grain hauling in winter, and getting threshed in fall, were problems.”⁶⁵

Geoff’s son Tom Hewson, the Rev. Cairns’ great-grandson, also described:

“When settlers first came in 1880s, there was a treeline extending south of Pipestone Valley a few miles. From highway nine, Pipestone crossing it ran southeast to Dickey farm, SW-28-13-2-W2, then mostly east to north edge of Sections 14 and 15. From there south to Moose Mountain there were only willows with odd exception like island in Jew Lake.”⁶⁶

“The bush area had 30-foot poplars, Saskatoon, chokecherry and other plants kept down by prairie fire area to south. Settlement allowed poplars to grow, especially around sloughs and on non-cultivated areas.



Tom & Bob Cairns leaving for Moose Mountain to haul wood. 1910-15.

65 *Saskatchewan Archives Questionnaires*, No. 2 Pioneer Experiences: A General Questionnaire. Cairns, Bob. 1952. P. 4.

66 So named for its proximity to the “Jew Settlement,” the 1884 site of the first Jewish community in North America. Called New Jerusalem, it was situated 26 miles southwest of Moosomin. The 350 settlers from 27 families lived on 9,000 acres divided into quarter sections. But only five years later, due to numerous factors, the settlement was doomed and settlers who survived moved away, mostly to Winnipeg. For more: *It’s A Dry Cold*. Hewson, Edith. P.80-2.

“...The first settlers were able to get logs from bush area along Pipestone for firewood and early buildings. Later settlers went to Moose Mountain and local areas of bush that had started to grow up.”⁶⁷

Amy (Dickey) Reynolds, granddaughter of the Rev. and Alice Cairns, writes about how it worked:

“It was a long working day for the men when they set out in the morning, armed with warm clothing, a hearty lunch, and sharp axes, heading for the bush which was many miles away. They had a trusty team of horses and a set of sleighs, just the bunks, on which they would pile the load of green poplar that they cut...

Some were good woodsmen and enjoyed a day in the bush, as they flexed their muscles wrestling with the tall poplars. They were careful to leave young saplings untouched for future use, but others were not so careful and left ragged cuts all around. Branches had to be trimmed off with only the poles left and these were then loaded on the sleighs...When all the various-sized poplars were loaded, the men climbed on top...and the long drive home began...

At home the wood was stacked in a big pile, ready for the wood-sawyers later. The big cast-iron stoves in the homes had insatiable appetites for large wood blocks which would burn all night when the fire was well stoked. The flat top also provided a surface for cooking...”⁶⁸



Sawing wood at Cairnbank. 1910-15.

67 *Tom Hewson Stories*. Hewson, Thomas. 2020.

68 *Heating—Full Circle. Langbank Memories*. Reynolds, Amaret B. 1984.



A later picture of wood-cutting at Cairnbank. 1900-1920.

Margaret Hewson, great-great granddaughter of Alice and the Reverend Cairns, describes the impact of all these years of dependence on wood and the hauling of it from Moose Mountain. “We still do it on the farm today,” she says. “We really enjoy wood hauling, wood cutting, wood stacking...it’s just in our DNA.”⁶⁹

A legacy of amusements

Of course, life on the farm isn’t all work. Some of the entertainment the Cairnses had in the earliest settlement days survives to today’s family, like the summer camping, fishing, and dancing at Fish Lake.

Fish Lake, which becomes Kenosee Lake in 1932, is an important resort for summertime fun. In 1905, the first road to the lake was built from a spot about three miles west of Carlyle to the west side of Fish Lake. Due to lack of potable water, when the new Highway #9 was built in the 1930s, it went to the east side of the lake. In 1933, Kenosee Gardens, the largest dance hall along the beach, is built. The Gardens, as it comes to be known, attracts big names in the Big Band era.⁷⁰

Margaret Kidd, a woman from the area, recorded her Fish Lake memories in a book of early settler stories called *This Was Their Life*, published in 1955. As she describes it, travelers to the lake from the surrounding area would pack

69 Interview with Margaret Hewson. Author, May 3, 2021.

70 *Kenosee Lake, Saskatchewan*. Found 9/15/21 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kenosee_Lake,_Saskatchewan.



Alice on a Fish Lake outing. Undated.

up tents, food, cooking and fishing equipment (especially remembering to include salt to pack the fish in) and set off across the bald prairie in a convoy of wagons with supplies and families. For fifteen miles, Moose Mountain would “loom ahead in a blue haze.” There were no houses along the way, and a “stagnant odor would rise from the alkali waters of Jew Lake as the wagons passed through the abandoned Jew Settlement.”⁷¹

The twenty-five-mile trip would take the day, with a stop for lunch. After setting up camp, other camps might be visited. The rest of the holiday time would be spent socializing around campfires, swimming, fishing, and attending the roofed open-air pavilion⁷² at night, dancing to the music of a lone fiddler, or sometimes a harmonica player.⁷³

Fish Lake will remain an important recreational and social spot for generations to come, as well as a source of employment, especially for local teens and young adults.

71 *Camping at Old Fish Lake (Kenosee)* from *This Was Their Life. Langbank Memories*. Kidd, Margaret. 1984. P. 33-4.

72 Later called Clarke's Pavilion.

73 *Camping at Old Fish Lake (Kenosee)* from *This Was Their Life. Langbank Memories*. Kidd, Margaret. 1984. P. 33-4.

Prairie pursuits

Alice writes to May about the fun that young Tom and Bob have, even in the cold of winter:

“Tom and Bob have been having great times skating; every Saturday evening they go up to Poplar Grove somewhere near where Janet teaches and skate on a slough which some of the boys have swept clean of snow; they light a fire, and seem to enjoy themselves. One evening nearly twenty of them were in one sleigh box when it upset, no one was hurt.”⁷⁴

In warmer weather, the community gets together for traveling theatrical entertainment, agricultural fairs, where they can compete for prizes in numerous categories, and picnics.

Hunting is not just a job required for meat and skins; it’s also a leisure activity for boys and men, both in groups, and alone. The Reverend has an 1897 Winchester twelve-gauge shotgun, which remains in the family today.⁷⁵



Tom and a haul of seven cranes. 1910.

74 Letter. Alice Cairns to May Waters. March 17, 1908.

75 Jay Cairns, son of Jim Cairns and J.A.'s great-great-grandson, has the shotgun today. (Both Jim and Jay have middle names that start with A, so, like their forebears J.A. and his son John, they are "J.A.s" too.)



It wasn't only the boys who could shoot a gun. Here Amy Cairns lines up a shot. Undated.

Says Alice, "One has to be very fond of sport or 'sporty' I think the English boys call it".⁷⁶

Without refrigeration, meat is often in short supply, and therefore valuable. The Reverend tells the hired men they would get a box of shells for every goose they kill. One afternoon one of the men asks the Reverend if he truly meant the offer, and when J.A. says yes, the man produces twelve geese.⁷⁷

The Cairns family is devoted to its community. Not only is the Reverend involved through his pastoral work, but he and Alice both become active leaders in development of the Poplar Grove district, as will their children and grandchildren.

The Ladies Aid & the Poplar Grove Community Hall

In 1911, the Ladies Aid is formed to further the work of the church. They hold events like teas and sell handicrafts and food to raise money to help fund the minister's salary, transportation costs and donations to the needy in the community.

⁷⁶ Letter. Alice Cairns to May Waters. March 17, 1908.

⁷⁷ Oral story told by Jim Cairns, Reverend Cairns' great-grandson, to Margaret Hewson. September 11, 2021.

Alice Cairns is elected its first secretary-treasurer, and in 1912, her daughters Janet and Amy join. Eventually multiple generations of the family would in some way be involved.

In 1919, they decide to build a community hall in Poplar Grove, and the hall is completed in 1920. In 1921, the Ladies Aid will purchase a piano and other furniture for the hall.

The hall becomes a community gathering place; a place where special things happen—from dances, debates, card parties and wedding receptions to fowl suppers, Christmas concerts, plays, elections, municipal meetings and even a few picture shows.

Bob Cairns will be the hall's first auditor and J.A. will be president of the hall from 1922 through 1923. He and Alice will be active members of the hall, as will their children and spouses after them.



Ladies Aid at Cairnbank, about 1912. Back row: Amy Cairns, Alice Cairns, Mrs. A. Blunt, Mrs. Dean, Mrs. J. Hitchcock. Front row: Unknown, Mrs. Robinson, Unknown, Mrs. Summerby, Mrs. Heal, Unknown. Courtesy *Langbank Memories*. P. 301.

Chapter 6

A Teacher & A Farmer

AS MUCH AS FARMING IS SIGNIFICANT to the Hewson story, so is education. Until World War II, there were only two professions open to women—nursing and teaching.⁷⁸

Alice, Janet, and Amy are all teachers, as will be some of Janet's descendants.⁷⁹ Janet becomes the Woodside school teacher for two years, from 1906–08. Woodside is a one-room schoolhouse five miles away from Cairnbank which doubles as a make-shift church holding services on Sunday. Amy also teaches in the area for several years at nearby Montgomery School and later Parkin School, about fifteen miles away from Woodside, as does Bob, briefly on a permit, for the summer of 1913.⁸⁰

From Alice's letters we know that in 1908, Janet drives herself in a one-horse cutter and comes home to Cairnbank every day. She takes her lunch with her, which is bread and butter, a little glass of preserves, a piece of apple pie, a graham wafer, and a piece of cold meat.⁸¹

78 *Rosie the Riveter*. From *Women in the Armed Forces in WWII*. History.com. Found 1/6/21 at <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/american-women-in-world-war-ii-1>.

79 In addition to Alice and her daughters Janet and Amy, her granddaughter Susan Dickey and three of her daughters, Barbara, Heather and Rosemary, would also teach.

80 *Saskatchewan Archives Questionnaires, No. 2 Pioneer Experiences: A General Questionnaire*. Cairns., Bob. 1952. P.3.

81 Letter from Alice Cairns to May Waters. February 21, 1908.



A portrait of Janet Cairns. Early 1900s.

Woodside and the country schools

Woodside School was built and opened in 1898. It was a single room, eighteen feet by twenty-eight feet. School property included a stable for horses, and two outhouses. The first teacher was Miss Rose, and she was paid forty dollars per month.

The school trustees were responsible for running the school. The main concerns of most rural school trustees during the early part of the century were three-fold: to hire a teacher; find enough money to pay them, and secure enough wood to try and keep the schools warm. They also managed daily issues as well as long-term development of the school.

In 1900, the secretary was instructed to inform the teacher to give recess twice daily. By 1902, the school was being used on Sundays for church services, with Rev. Munroe in charge. In 1916, the school committee moved that the outhouses be placed together with a board partition between them, and wooden boxes made which could be drawn out from underneath to be cleaned. In 1917, in addition to children receiving their usual six weeks of summer holiday, it was moved that older children also be “let out for one month in harvest.” They



Woodside School, where Janet Cairns taught, and generations of family children attended. Early 1900s.



Sleighs full of children arrive at Montgomery School on a winter morning in 1904.

advertised for a male teacher in 1926, and would hire one, but only a handful of men would teach there between 1898 and 1960.⁸²

Several generations of family children will take their elementary school education at Woodside, and before the community hall is built in 1920, Woodside School is also the centre of community gatherings.

Montgomery School located at NE-16-13-3-W3 also plays an important role in the Cairns' family history. The youngest children, Bob and Tom, are educated there and Amy Cairns teaches there from 1902-04.⁸³

82 *Woodside School District #402 SW 34-13-2. Langbank Memories.* 1984. P.307-08.

83 *Montgomery School, Montgomery District. Langbank Memories.* Bruce, Andrew. 1984. P. 233-4.

High school education is generally provided via correspondence to Grade 9 and 10 students who also attend the country schools followed by Grades 11 and 12 overseen by a teacher first in Whitewood and then in Langbank when a two-room school house opens in 1926.⁸⁴

A man enters the picture

Janet's life is well-organized and productive; like her parents, she works hard. But in 1908, she finds someone who brings something else to her life, and her mother believes this young man has good potential, judging by his means of transportation:

“We nearly always have some of the bachelor folks on Sunday after church, so we like to have an extra nice cake. Mr. Dickey, our post-master is the usual one now. I think Janet is flirting with him. He is a Nova Scotian, has a good buggy and cutter; a buggy or cutter are considered to be valuable adjuncts to a bachelor man, indeed, some say a poor bachelor has no chance at all to get a wife without them. F. Gravener often says he will get a buggy.”⁸⁵

Technically, Mr. Dickey isn't a bachelor when he meets Janet Cairns, he is a widower. In 1904, after a short marriage at a young age, John's wife, Annabelle Wickham, tragically dies of tuberculosis, which is ravaging North America at the time.⁸⁶

John Bates Dickey was born on January 18, 1871, in Middle Musquodoboit, Halifax County, Nova Scotia, as one of thirteen children, six girls and seven boys. These included a set of twins. John's father George Dickey was born in Truro, Nova Scotia, and during the Gold Rush he went to Australia. He returned in 1858 and married Susanna Bates. George was appointed Justice of the Peace in

84 At the close of the 1959-60 term both Montgomery and Woodside schools were closed, the pupils conveyed to Langbank and younger children joined their older siblings attending school in Langbank where area high school students had been attending school.

85 Letter. Alice Cairns to May Waters. February 21, 1908. P. 3.

86 Tuberculosis, or “consumption” as it was commonly called in the 1800s, is an infectious disease that primarily affects the lungs. Once smallpox was controlled by vaccination in the nineteenth century, infection with *the tubercle bacillus* became the most fearsome plague in Asian and European countries. It arrived in western Canada by the mid-nineteenth century. At its height in 1900, the mortality rate was 180 in 100,000 population in Canada. From *Tuberculosis, Canadian Encyclopedia*. Found on 6/15/21 online at <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/tuberculosis>.



Young John Dickey before coming out west. 1880s.

1867, a position he held until his death at age eighty-three on Christmas Day, 1913. John's mother Susanna died on May 7, 1910, at age seventy-two. Both are buried in the Hillside Cemetery in Middle Musquodoboit, Nova Scotia.

Bates, John's middle name, is an Anglicized acknowledgement of his ancestor, Nicolaus Batz. Batz was one of 30,000 Hessians hired by the British to help in the war against the Americans in 1775. The term "Hessians" refers to German troops hired by the British to help fight during the American Revolution by 1776.⁸⁷

As a child, John was needed at home, so had to leave school at an early age, but that never prevented him from learning; he would become a self-educated man who would acquire broad knowledge and many practical skills.

In 1892, with ten dollars in his pocket, John Dickey leaves home to travel to the District of Assiniboia to work for Mr. William Archibald of Poplar Grove, who is a relative by marriage. This is the same Archibald family that influenced the Reverend Cairns to come to the area.

Some of his time is spent looking after cattle. In 1896, he buys land of his own, the homestead quarter NW-20-13-2-W2, usually referred to as the "prairie quarter," and SW-28-13-2-W2 which becomes the family home, Lawkland

87 *Ancestry of John Bates Dickey*. mywatersfamily.com.

Farm. His grandson Tom Hewson recalls some of his stories about a climate and landscape that was unforgiving, even to livestock:

“Grampa Dickey told stories about his early days in the west. Archibald used to winter cattle at Jew Lake, put up hay there and Grampa stayed there to fork hay over the fence and see that they had water. Said water in lake was so saline, had to dig seepage well and pump water. Must have been dry years in 1890’s. Said one winter in March he had not had mail for some time so walked over frozen snowbanks to Archibald’s by moonlight and back before snowbanks started to thaw in morning. Said one summer they found very good hay meadow just north of Jew Lake. Also said they built a log shed for cattle shelter on Archibald place. Blizzard came up and froze legs on some steers that stood next to gaps in logs...”⁸⁸

Although they were from the same town in Nova Scotia, John Dickey and Janet Cairns were twelve years apart in age and had never met there.

But now, in the prairies, their relationship blossoms, no doubt fueled by a deep connection. John was a recent widower, and Janet had been engaged the year before to marry a man in Barney’s River, Nova Scotia, who had died the previous summer, in 1907. Both John and Janet had faced the death of someone they loved enough to marry. When they become betrothed in the spring of 1908,



The sign identifying Lawkland Farm for visitors. Undated.



Janet Cairns around the time of her wedding. It's unclear if this is her wedding dress, but it is possible. Undated.

Alice writes, “Mr. Dickey has a partner promised, Janet wears an engagement ring again...I am much better pleased with her choice this time...”⁸⁹

In the summer of 1908, Janet is with her mother in Winnipeg, shopping for her trousseau:

“My dear John: We have been shopping this morning, and I have bought my white dress ready made, also my suit. Begins to look like business, eh, Mr. D.? This afternoon I have to look for a hat and about three hundred and sixty-nine other things too numerous to mention...” She continues the letter later in the day, “I am already longing to get back. I guess absence makes the heart grow fonder all right, John...I am your loving Janet.”⁹⁰

A second letter written at 10:00 p.m. that night is contained in the envelope with the first:

89 Letter. Alice Cairns to May Waters. May 21, 1908.

90 Letter. Janet Cairns to John Dickey. July 31, 1908.

“I am sitting on the edge of my bed and you know my occupation. You see, John, I hope to have so few opportunities or excuses to write to you, that I am making the most of this one. I know you can’t get this letter till next week when I am home, but I am sure you won’t mind, and will perhaps condescend to read it. I tried on my white dress this evening. It looks pretty nice, I think, and it was rather a bargain, too. We have found Eaton’s most disappointing, and have got most of our bargains elsewhere.

“John, the day is just six weeks off now—less when you get this. I begin to feel as if it is near instead of far.

“This is a fearfully noisy place. Mamma and I think we would rather be home feeding the chickens than here in the city. Neither of us slept much last night, the electric cars make such a noise...”⁹¹

John sends his mother a picture of his fiancée, who seems to approve. She writes him a month before the wedding to say, “I received the Photo all right and was very much pleased to get it. She is a nice-looking girl and Will G. says she is as good as she looks. I can see her father’s looks in her...She looks as if you would not get tired sitting opposite her three times a day if you be so fortunate as to get her.”⁹²

On September 9, 1908, John does indeed get her. Their wedding is heralded by a local newspaper:

“A pleasant event took place at the home of Rev. and Mrs. Cairns, in this district, at 8 o’clock on Wednesday, September 9th, when their eldest daughter, miss Janet, and Mr. John Dickey, also of the Grove, were joined in the holy bonds of matrimony, the Rev. Mr. Middlemiss conducting the ceremony. Only the immediate friends of the contracting parties were present. After the nuptial knot had been tied, a sumptuous wedding supper was partaken of and a pleasant evening spent in social chat and games, and vocal and instrumental music. The bride’s many friends in the different school districts where she has so conscientiously discharged the duties devolving upon her, both by voice and precept, and who did all in her power to guide the young in ways that were right, will be pleased to know that she has in the person of the genial John secured for a husband

91 *ibid.*

92 Letter. Suzanna Dickey to her son John Dickey. August 6, 1908.

an honorable, upright and highly esteemed citizen and a jolly good fellow. The young couple have the best wishes of all in the district for a long life of connubial bliss.”⁹³

The couple first lives in a log house on the farm, then build a new frame house. For fifteen years beginning in 1896, well before he met Janet, John is the popular postmaster with the Poplar Grove post office, located in the log house. People go for their mail and stop for a visit as well, since seeing neighbors is a favorite form of entertainment.⁹⁴



A mustachioed John Dickey reclines on a couch with a cat early in his marriage to Janet Cairns. Undated.

93 *Poplar Grove Herald*. September 1908.

94 *Pioneers of Poplar Grove*, Reynolds, Amaret. January 1979.

Chapter 7

Five Little Dickey Birds

AT LAWKLAND FARM, John and Janet Dickey start a family immediately after marrying in the summer of 1908. In early 1909, Alice is ecstatic at the prospect of becoming a grandmother: “Janet is making tiny garments, I hope she will have a girl, just fancy me being a grandmother!”⁹⁵

Her wish is answered on June 21, 1909. John and Janet name her Alice, after her grandmother. Unfortunately, baby Alice contracts tuberculosis in the spring of 1910. Her grandmother comes to visit on April 21, noting that she is “slightly brighter,” but by May 2 her condition has worsened. Alice writes in her diary: “May 2—Alice so much worse. May 3—Up at Janet’s all night. Alice is very very weak.”⁹⁶

Alice dies from tuberculosis on May 4, 1910. Alice writes: “May 4—Alice died this morning. Up at Janet’s all day. Papa went for coffin.”⁹⁷ After the baby’s death, the grief-stricken parents go to Dr. Hilts and get a recipe for disinfecting the house, but ultimately, Janet insists they build a new one.

The Dickeys will have a total of seven children, all girls, five of whom survive. The surviving children are Susan Margaret (b. September 4, 1910); Janet Cairns (b. November 16, 1911); Sarah Anabel “Sadie” (b. July 30, 1913); the fifth family Amaret (Amy) Bates, (b. April 26, 1917) and Elizabeth (b. August 7, 1927). Janet is a few days shy of her forty-fourth birthday when she has her last child.

95 Letter. Alice Cairns to May Waters. February 24, 1909.

96 Diary. Alice Cairns. May 2-3, 1910.

97 *ibid.* May 4, 1910.

BIRTHS.

DICKIE—At Poplar Grove, Sask., on Monday, June 21, to Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Dickie, a daughter. 1909.

The Land of Little Faces.

I wonder, oh I wonder, where the little
 * faces go,
 That come and smile and stay awhile,
 then fade like flakes of snow.
 The dear, wee baby faces, that the world
 has never known;
 But mother's hide, so tender-eyed, deep
 in their hearts alone.

Birth and death notices for baby Alice Dickey, John and Janet's first child, surrounded by poignant poetry. 1909-10. Newspaper clippings from Janet (Cairns) Dickey's scrapbook.

The death of Mr. and Mrs. Dickie's little daughter Alice took place on Wednesday. The remains were interred in the Kennedy cemetery. They have the heartfelt sympathy of all friends and acquaintances in their sad loss.

What is Left

By M. K. Howard

HERE in my drawer, a letter, and a curl
 Of golden hair; a withered hyacinth —
 A pair of tiny cuffs, half-raveled out,
 And all the wool tied up about the top
 With labored knots, to keep it in its place.
 A dolly's teapot, cracked, without a lid,
 And half its gaudy decorations gone
 Through frequent washings, done by little hands.
 Dear little hands — they grew so tired once,
 God took them in His own, and folded them.
 They never wash the dolly's dishes now.
 The little cuffs will never be worn out.
 No other hands shall wear them. And the curl?
 It is not I will brush it any more.
 Why speak? Three years ago Death took the rest.
 Tears will not cure the pain. Shut up the drawer.
 Words will not ease it. To be mute is best.

A child born before Elizabeth, named Mary Charlotte Dickey, is taken to Brandon for surgery a month after her birthday (October 6, 1923). Before going to Manitoba, Bob drives J.A. and Alice over to Janet's where the Reverend baptizes the infant. Then the Reverend accompanies Janet and the baby to Brandon. On November 7, Mary Charlotte has her operation; she dies two days later. On November 10, Bob and a neighbour dig a grave, and the next day a funeral, officiated by Mr. Skea, allows the family and the community to grieve.⁹⁸

There is no indication of what was wrong with the baby. John and Janet's granddaughter, Chris Evans, would later recall her mother Elizabeth saying that baby Mary Charlotte had pyloric stenosis, a condition which Janet's grandson, Robin, would also later be afflicted with. Because of this experience, the family was perhaps able to quickly recognize the symptoms, possibly saving his life.⁹⁹

The lives of the five daughters are colorfully described in a lengthy essay called "Five Little Dickey Birds," penned by the second-youngest daughter, Amy, as an adult in 1986. She writes about an idyllic life on the farm with a gentle, nurturing mother who instructs the girls in sewing and cooking; and a fun-loving father who is self-educated, has wide knowledge and many practical skills. Both parents teach their girls about the importance of reading (the house

⁹⁸ Diary of Alice Cairns. October 6-November 11, 1923.

⁹⁹ This story is told in Chapter 25.



Early picture of John and Janet with daughters Susan (left) and Janet Jr. (right). 1912.



A later picture of the Dickey family, including the last-born Elizabeth. Standing L to R: Janet Sr., Amy and John. Front L to R: Elizabeth, Janet Jr., Sadie, Susan and the family dog. 1930.



John Dickey feeds ducklings at Lawkland Farm. Old log house in front and frame house in back. Undated.

is full of books), botany and gardening. They also share important values, which they also model, such as honesty, reliability, responsibility, and compassion.

When Susan and Janet are young, they live in the log house, but as the family grows, John and Janet build a new frame house beside the old one, with a cellar, kitchen, pantry, living room and bedroom on the main floor and four bedrooms upstairs. In Sadie's room there is something special: the "Big Trunk"—a trunk their mother brought from Nova Scotia:

"Many wonderful things came out of that trunk. When one of the little girls was ill, and possibly had to take some bitter medicine, or have a nasty mustard plaster, they would be promised "I'll get you a Trunk Thing" by their mother. She would go to the trunk and come up with something, perhaps a pretty ribbon for their hair, or a small ornament of some kind, and all this made the bitter dose easier. There was also a fancy hat she had worn as a girl and Mrs. Dickey would get that out occasionally and show it to the little girls. It was flat and like a cartwheel, made of braid such as

they had never seen before, trimmed with several enormous roses, and all this was pinned on the wearer with giant hat pins.”¹⁰⁰

There are few conveniences, and no electric lights. Each bedroom has a coal oil lamp. Downstairs there are two Aladdin lamps with metal bases, tall glass chimneys and fragile mantles. The living room is not large, but it is well lived in, with every available space overflowing with reading material, handwork like crocheting, knitting and even tatting. Making quilts is a favorite occupation. Sadie’s pattern is Wild Goose and Amy’s is Single Irish Chain, and both are in pink and white.

The girls are mostly taught at Woodside. Sadie excels at math. Amy is shy but loves art and composition. All the girls are good at spelling; Janet wins a gold medal in the spelling bee one year.

Dickey dolls

The girls love dolls, the most precious of which are handmade by their mother, and they make elaborate clothes for them, thus learning how to sew. They have so many dolls that they need help coming up with new names, and their father is happy to oblige, rhyming off all the names of the *Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe*:

“There was Ella and Nell and Mary Belle and Laura and Lora and Maud and Dell, Sara, Sammy and Josephine, Nora and Norman and Madeleine, Lillian, Archibald, Harry, Christopher, Charlie, Pete and Carrie, Jennie and Johnnie and Theodore and over a half a dozen more.” When the little girls asked their father what the other half dozen were named, he told them Kate and Duplicate, and Wise and Unwise, and then he probably ran out of ideas for the remaining two...”¹⁰¹

In playing with their dolls at outdoor tea parties, Amy writes, they learned “to be a polite and hospitable hostess or alternately, how to act in the proper manner as a guest.”¹⁰² This interest continues into adulthood, where Amy and Janet make elaborate rag dolls with pretty faces and interesting wardrobes.

One of their favourite locations to play outside is on the rope swing, that is, until their cousin makes them something even better:

100 *5 Little Dickey birds*, Part 1, Reynolds, Amaret. November 1984. P. 6.

101 *5 Little Dickey birds*, Part 3, Reynolds, Amaret. December 1987. P. 3.

102 *ibid.*

“The girls didn’t use their rope swing as much after their Cousin Elmer Cowan made them a wooden lawn swing. This had double wooden slatted seats facing one another and was set up close to the east side of the house. The girls and their visiting friends spent many happy hours playing in and around the lawn swing, and they made up all sorts of pretending games around it and played with their favorite dolls on the swing. In the fall Mr. Dickey took the lawn swing down and folded it up and put it in the Old House so it would not deteriorate in the winter snows.”¹⁰³

103 *5 Little Dickey birds*, Part 3. Reynolds, Amaret. November 1985. P. 7.

The “Dickey Birds”



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE LEFT: This image is labeled “Stair-steps,” and features four of the Dickey birds. L to R: Susan, Janet, Sadie and Amy, in descending height. 1925.

The wooden swing built by the girls’ cousin Elmer Cowan. L: Amy & Sadie. R: Janet. 1923.

Janet, Sadie & Amy play with ducklings. Amy is clutching two of the famous Dickey dolls. 1923.





The Dickey girls pick potatoes at Lawkland with their father John.
L to R: Susan, Janet, John, Amy and Sadie. 1923.



L to R: Susan & Janet play with farm kittens and the family dog. 1914.

They enjoy playing games, sleigh rides in the winter, and school-related activities especially at Hallowe'en and Christmas. One year their mother declares they need a piano, and one is purchased, with all the girls learning to play at least a little from Mr. Giblett, who drives around with his horse and buggy giving music lessons.

In later years when the girls are older, Mrs. Dickey sells a gold watch and a treasured gold piece to get the money to buy a mantel radio, the family's first radio. John and Janet like to hear the news, while all the family listens to the *Lux Radio Theatre*.¹⁰⁴ They also enjoy *Fibber McGee & Molly*, *Vic and Sade*, *Amos and Andy* and the *Happy Gang*.

As Amy writes, "Times were not easy, as the Depression was part of their life, but hard times build backbone and probably not one of the girls would, if given the opportunity, exchange the time in which they grew up for this troubled era now."¹⁰⁵

104 *Lux Radio Theatre*. Found 8/31/21 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lux_Radio_Theatre.

105 *5 Little Dickey birds*, Part 1. Reynolds, Amaret. November 1984. P. 15.

Chapter 8

Making a Living at Cairnbank

THE SAME YEAR JANET AND JOHN ARE MARRIED, J.A. and Alice begin building at Cairnbank. In 1908, with no previous construction experience, the Reverend builds a twenty-eight-foot by sixty-foot barn. That year they become the first family in the community to have a hay sling for putting hay in the barn, only one of a long string of agricultural firsts the family will have over the coming decades. “We owned and operated the first combine around here, an International 16 ft., in 1928,” Bob says. “We had the first string-tying hay baler in 1947, the first 55 Diesel tractor (Massey) in 1949, and the first John Deere in 1952.”¹⁰⁶

But 1908 is a tough year for the Cairnses, and for their community:

“Mr. Cairns and John have got the wheat shipped. We have a new station two miles and a half away [Langbank] built last summer, on a new line, though the railway is not open for passengers, the farmers can get cars at their own risk and send them to Port Arthur. We only had about 900 bushels of wheat, everyone around here had no crop or very small last year. This has been the hardest winter in money matters for a long time in the west. Everybody wants money and no one has any.”¹⁰⁷

106 *Archives Questionnaires, No. 2 Pioneer Experiences: A General Questionnaire*. Cairns, Bob. 1952. P. 5.

107 Letter. Alice Cairns to May Waters. March 17, 1908.



Taking a page from Cairnbank history ...
TOP: House built in 1911 with original sod and log house built into the hill on the right.
BOTTOM: New barn built in 1908.

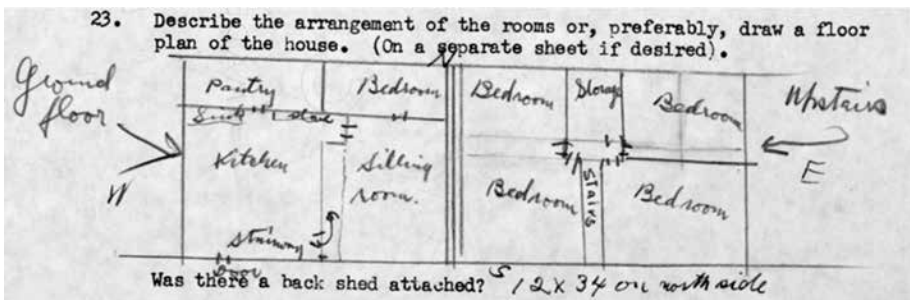
A new house

Finally in 1911, J.A., his sons and a hired hand build a twenty-two foot by thirty-four foot two-story frame house with a concrete foundation at a total construction cost of about \$1,500. The construction takes about six months, from June to November, and a great deal of inside work is done after that. At Alice's request, they also build a cistern. The floors are covered in linoleum; there is an indoor toilet. A full-size basement with a dirt floor and concrete walls is accessed from the kitchen. A well outside the house provides the water source.

The ceilings are seven feet high, and the interior walls are finished with plaster and paper. The ceilings are also plaster. The floors are made of three-inch fir. There are four windows on each floor. The front door is paneled with a brass doorknob. The interior doors have porcelain knobs, and there is a closed stairway leading to the upper floor of bedrooms. There is a brick chimney, but no fireplace, only the cookstove in the kitchen and a tin heater in the sitting room.¹⁰⁸

The main floor of the house is furnished with an organ, a sofa, two rocking chairs, hooked mats brought from Nova Scotia and curtains, some of which they purchase from Eaton's, and a horsehair easy chair.

A twelve foot by thirty-four foot addition is later built for additional storage space and to make room for a cream separator and other implements. While it is certainly a big step up in accommodation from the sod house, it doesn't mean life suddenly becomes easy; pioneer life is arduous on the unforgiving prairies.



The plan for the house at Cairnbank, built by J.A., a hired hand and sons in 1911. Taken from Robert Cairns' Pioneer Questionnaire No. 9, Saskatchewan Archives.

108 *Pioneer Questionnaire No. 9, Saskatchewan Archives*. There would be no electricity or wood-burning furnace heat until 1924 when a wood-burning furnace is installed in the basement, and no plumbing or insulation would be installed until the 1950s.

The family business

Economic survival is difficult, but the Cairnses make the most of everything they have, and it's a family enterprise. In addition to growing wheat, they raise livestock. Bob recalls "wonderful times herding cattle—long lazy days taking the herd out in the morning and reading or sleeping most of the time, till it was time to bring them in at night."¹⁰⁹

Horses were always a big part of life at Cairnbank. J.A. was developing his own herd, crossbreeding two very different stocks. Harold Cox, who would work on the farm years later, describes the Reverend's herd:

"I believe Reverend Cairns had bought some mares from the Indian reserve which he bred with a Clydesdale stallion to raise horses for sale. The cross produced medium-weight horses that were as tough as leather, and some of which had mean or wild dispositions.

"They had 52 head when I arrived there, which we turned loose on the prairie as soon as the crops were off. Cairnbank was fenced, and we used to feed them oats from time to time to keep them coming home. In the spring Geoff and Bob would go out and round them up and bring them home. The odd one would go missing and they would have quite a hunt until they found it.

"All of them were branded to allow identification of strays. Most winters they came home fat, having lived on prairie wool, which was a short natural grass."¹¹⁰

Raising and selling horses isn't only necessary for pulling farm equipment like the thresher and ploughs, but they're also a good source of income. J.A. writes to his uncle-in-law, Ben Waters:

"Young colts 6 months old are stabled and fed the first winter but after that, they are never touched till they are old enough to be put to work as work horses. This is a very cheap way of raising horses and there is lots of money in horses these days. A team of horses weighing perhaps 1300 lbs. each will bring about 400 dollars cash, and when the horses come home in the spring they are about as fat as the ones that have been fed in the

109 *Saskatchewan Archives Questionnaires, No. 2 Pioneer Experiences: A General Questionnaire.* Cairns, Bob. 1952. P. 7.

110 *Reminiscences by Harold Cox.* Compiled by Chris Evans. September 14, 2001. P. 12.



Bob and a four-horse team. 1920s.

stable all winter, they don't mind the cold as their hair grows extra long and thick to protect them. Our little bunch is increasing slowly now we have 29 altogether...I give the boys the biggest part of the work to do and they enjoy it as it suits them so well."¹¹¹

Alice summarizes the farm's overall income and expense picture:

"I cannot tell you what we earn or make in a year, but this I know, we have about 1500 bushels of wheat to sell...We will have that clear pretty nearly this year, as the cattle and pigs have paid almost all the expenses. That is hire of man 80\$, threshing bill 240\$, new bull 75\$, church subscription 30\$, farm machinery 200\$. With the usual Canadian carelessness, we do not keep accounts so I cannot tell what the household expenses are, we burn wood which we get free, raise our own meat, vegetables, butter, milk, eggs and poultry. I think you must have done wonderfully to live on 110 pounds a year."¹¹²

They even economize on the costs of demurrage,¹¹³ an expense they explain to their English relatives:

"When a man fills a car he has to get it done inside of 24 hours else he may have to pay demurrage so he hires his neighbours to help him at the

111 Letter. J.A. Cairns to Benjamin Waters. January 12, 1911.

112 Letter. Alice Cairns to May Waters. March 12, 1911.

113 Demurrage charges are incurred when the full container is not moved out of the port/terminal for unpacking within the allowed free days offered by the shipping line. The fees, initially paid by grain handling companies, are eventually passed on to farmers. From <https://www.producer.com/news/apas-calls-for-railways-to-pay-demurrage-when-grain-is-delayed/>.

rate of 2 ½ dollars a day. Every one does not fill a car, some sell it outright to the elevator at the station, some store it in the elevator, others get the elevator to load it for them. We are so near we can do as we like without hiring any help in hauling....”¹¹⁴

Alice also makes money from selling hens, turkeys, eggs, and butter; charging wedding fees, and winning prizes from the fairs for knitting:

“Wedding fees are growing scarcer each year but two came my way this year 10\$ and 8\$. The other things brought in 150\$ leaving out the butter money...My money has to go to sheets, towels, extra groceries, nice graniteware pots and kettles, dishes of all kinds and yarn and everything too numerous to mention but I could hold onto it better if I wanted to.”¹¹⁵

Alice is hard on herself, a typical unsung and usually unpaid caregiver, but also admits to May:

“But, oh, I wish Mr. Cairns and I had a small house or home to ourselves. The work for so many and the house to care for is too much. If I could only get a woman in every now and then to iron, wash floors and paint, it would be alright. There are seven of us all the time this winter.”¹¹⁶



Tom in wagon box, Bob with bag of wheat and Mr. Wrangham in fur coat at the back. Undated.

114 *ibid.*

115 *ibid.*

116 Letter. Alice Cairns to May and Edith Waters. Undated. 1911.

Chapter 9

Amy Marries a Man Like Dad

BY 1914 THE OTHER CAIRNS CHILDREN are growing up and moving out into the world. Most exciting of all, there are two more Cairns weddings just around the corner. Five years after her sister Janet ties the knot, the Cairns' younger daughter, Amy, will marry the Reverend W.O. Mulligan on January 6, 1914.

Amy attends university in Winnipeg but comes home often and is a big help to her mother with housework. She is a creative child who grows into an artistic woman. When she graduates, she sews her own gown, and she loves to paint. She teaches for several years in the Whitewood and Wapella area.

In February 1909, Alice writes to May about the previous Christmas, saying, "I told Amy we need not have bread-sauce, as Billy Kinch was up north, but she has acquired a taste for that compound. I made more than I intended. Amy saved every bit, and warmed it up for one dinner, and burnt it up for the next."¹¹⁷

Amy thanks her mother by shooing her off to rest after Christmas dinner and doing the dishes with a friend.



A young Amy Cairns. Undated.



“Little, fair-haired, blue-eyed”
W.O Mulligan. Undated.

In the same letter, Alice writes about Amy’s experience at college:

“She took back three loaves of home-made bread, sixteen eggs (that was all we could put in the can she packed them in) and some scotch short-bread, the latter delicacies to treat her college-mates during lesson hours! The scotch cakes were rather a failure they ran over the pan when baking, but they tasted nice. She is having “just the loveliest time” going to college, but for all that, she was well up in the Xmas exams.”¹¹⁸

Alice is impressed with Amy’s new beau—his name notwithstanding:

“Mulligan is a dreadful name, but little, fair-haired, blue-eyed ‘W.O.’ as Amy calls him is a ‘Mulligan’ in name only, not in looks...He has not quite finished his studies, so he attends classes in Hfx [Halifax] this winter as well as preaching, he is a B.A. but is getting a M.A. he gets \$900 a year for preaching, and \$4.00 a week for writing news to a Winnipeg newspaper, he is very fond of journalistic work, indeed, he put himself through college with it.”¹¹⁹

118 *ibid.*

119 Letter. Alice Cairns to May Waters. March 8, 1914.

Alice's account of Amy and W.O.'s eventual wedding gives a good picture of what an early twentieth century prairie wedding celebration was like. Despite a long engagement, it doesn't seem that the twenty-five-year-old bride is quite ready to marry her thirty-five-year-old fiancé:

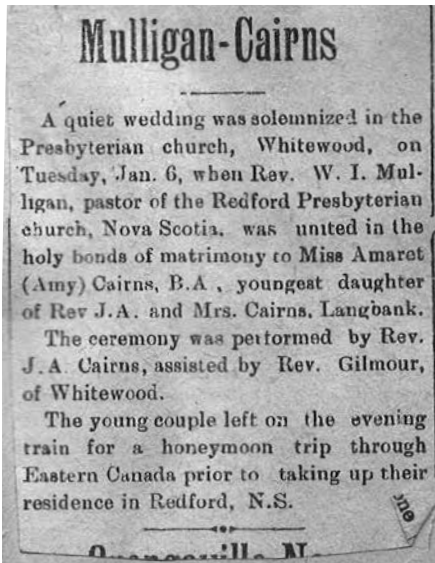
"Amy would not tell she was going to get married till about four weeks before, and then she only told me and I was bound over to keep the peace, but when W.O. came up from Nova Scotia, it had to be told. W.O. went East over a year ago, he was in Princeton, N.J. all last winter, Princeton Theological Seminary, so not being around here for nearly two years, people had almost begun to think Amy was not to be married. They were engaged for about five years."¹²⁰

However, the wedding does go off, as Alice describes, even though the bride is still reluctant:

"So off we started, 2 hours before sunrise on Jan. 6th, 1914, a mild morning for here, about 6 degrees above zero. Tom and Mr. Wrangham in one big sleigh, Papa, Miss Hamilton, Amy, Bob and I in another big sleigh. Miss Hamilton and Amy had a carbon foot warmer, I had a foot muff, menfolks are supposed never to have cold feet. Bob drove our conveyance.

"We must have appeared a funny wedding party. We drove nearly 20 miles and got into Whitewood about half-past ten. Amy said the ceremony was not to be till half-past eleven, but I knew Mr. Mulligan said eleven, we gave in to Amy and went to a hotel and were comfortably sitting around the radiator in the hotel parlour when Mr. Mulligan came running upstairs telling Amy it was to be at eleven, and that his friend, the Presbyterian minister, Mr. Gilmour wanted us to go to their house for dinner.

"I was annoyed, because we had had ordered dinner at the hotel, where we could all be together, and we did not all like to go to Mr. Gilmour's. However, off we rushed to the church, Amy protesting to the last minute that she did not want to get married. Then after the marriage in an almost empty church, for people out here are not used to people getting married in churches, and think they are intruding if they go uninvited, we went to Mr. Gilmour's to dinner. Amy said, "I haven't got to walk beside him, have I?" We told her she had to; so there we took dinner...



Amy and W.O. Mulligan's wedding announcement.



The just-wed bride and groom, Amy (Cairns) and William Mulligan, ready to board the train for their move to Eastern Canada immediately following their wedding dinner on Jan 6, 1914.

“We had a nice turkey, plum pudding, wedding cake, potatoes, cranberry sauce etc. The boys had to be at the hotel for their dinner. The train was to leave soon after one, so we went to the station and Amy put in a bad quarter of an hour. Mr. W. went and got rice, and some children, overhead in the station house, threw down wheat on us out of the window, people stared and said, “there must be a wedding.” They threw rice and kept it up till she was nearly on the train, the conductor told them to stop, it was very nice of him. Mr. Wrangham was the worst, he always gets out of bounds when he is near a hotel bar. He gave Amy a nice brooch as soon as we got in town.”¹²¹

Amy and W.O.’s move to Eastern Canada is a blow to her mother, who writes May:

“I do miss Amy very much, she was always rather masterful in the household affairs, and that was a comfort to me, for if things got in a jumble, I just took it easy, till she straightened them out. I had to cry every day for awhile after she left, I felt so forlorn.”¹²²

121 *ibid.*

122 *ibid.*

The Cairns boys branch out

The Reverend and Alice's eldest son, John Jr., begins homesteading the SE-12-13-3-W₂¹²³ and by 1911 has two crops from it and is also trading in horses. Alice describes this in a letter to May:

“John has a quarter homestead of land (160 acres) next to our land and has had two crops off it, he works for his father and for pay he uses his father's horses and machinery to work the land. Last summer he paid \$100 to get some more of his qtr broken, so this summer he will have a crop of 60 acres, his land is specially good for wheat as it is high and frost seldom touches it, only the land is stoney and perhaps only 120 acres can be broken.

“John has a pony mare who has had two colts since he got her also he bought a mare and foal at a sale for 116\$ now the former owner wants the mare back offers John 150 \$ for the mare alone. Mares are in great demand as it is a good country to raise foals. That is John's money earning ways.”¹²⁴

Young Tom is still working at home on the farm, as Alice describes:

“Tom just works for us yet but people are offering him 35\$ a month for the year he is not 17 so that is a good deal, he is so tall, broad and quick. John is tall too but rather heavier in build (and) on his feet. Tom earned about 60\$ last year working for F. Gravener at harvest and by gathering up the grain spilled by the threshing machine also by helping neighbours haul grain to the railway.”

But Tom (so like his quick-witted and prank-pulling grandfather Thomas Waters Jr.) also finds time to have some fun, courtesy of a new technology coming to Langbank: the telephone.

New technology provides entertainment

In the summer of 1912, the first telephone is installed in Langbank by the Langbank Telephone Company. Young Tom, still at home working on the farm, has fun winding up nosy neighbors, as told years later by Edith (Marks) Hewson:

¹²³ The present-day Lyle Balogh home quarter.

¹²⁴ Letter. Alice Cairns to May Waters. March 12, 1911.

“Nurse Jessie McDougall, my mother’s sister, and...Tom Cairns, made capital fun locally out of this great invention. They set up all kinds of phony events on the sly. When they called each other, it was evident that “listeners” were on the line from the number of stealthy clicks that could be heard.

“One of their most successful scams was their pretended engagement. They held long telephone conversations on where their supposed wedding would take place, whether they would elope, their future home and whom they might invite to the wedding. The Reverend Cairns was very surprised during the following weeks to be constantly buttonholed by several of the neighboring women and asked about the imminent wedding of his bachelor son.”¹²⁵

While Tom is having fun, his brother Bob follows more serious pursuits.

Bob goes to the province’s new university

In 1911, Bob finishes schooling at Montgomery and Whitewood and enrolls in the first College of Engineering class at the new University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon for 1912. He becomes involved in numerous activities by his third year in 1914, and in the spring of that year, he writes a colorful and entertaining letter to his mother that illustrates what his life there is like:

“Dear Mother:

“Thank you very much for the cookies. They are fine. It was too bad about the dog “swiping” those that Janet made. Your letter came the same day that Papa did, on Wednesday. He was waiting for me in the Mechanics Building at nine o’clock in the morning when I went up there to work. I was not exactly surprised to see him, as I expected him on Tuesday, but he stopped off a day in Regina, as you know. I was glad to see him, anyway. He stayed with me when he was here, but got most of his meals at the hotel.

“President Murray’s reception was on Wednesday night. I went, and had a pretty good time. He has a large, stone house, beautifully furnished.¹²⁶ There was dancing and games, and about ten o’clock a lunch was served, and we left at twelve of course. There were about forty or fifty present.

125 *It’s a Dry Cold, You Don’t Feel It!* Hewson, Edith. 1997. P. 158.

126 The President’s Residence had just been built two years earlier, in 1913 and the University’s first president, Walter Murray, lived there for 25 years, longer than any other president since. For more: <https://thesheaf.com/2017/09/18/presidents-residence-excellence-brief-history/>.



The President's Residence at the University of Saskatchewan, built in 1913. Courtesy University of Saskatchewan, University Archives & Special Collections, Photograph Collection, A-707.

"I went for a long walk today, out to Sutherland, the C.P.R. divisional point. It is about two miles from the university, and four or five from S'toon.

"The snow is just beginning to go, on the prairie, at least, to any great extent.

"I am sending a few "starbeams" from "The Star".¹²⁷

"Father has a book of recitations for John, and a few songs that Tom might have some use for. I got one of the songbooks when I was down at the play, *Mutt and Jeff in Mexico*.¹²⁸ It was sold for 10c, and was supposed to have all the songs that were sung in the play, but it only had one of them, "Moonbeams."

"The oratorical contest was held here on Friday night. There were eleven orators, or rather eleven fellows got up and spoke, I won't call them all orators. A first-year man named Dimock got first prize, while the second prize went to Glover, a third year Theologue.

"We are going to try to get Haney in for President of the University Athletic Association for next year. The engineers almost controlled all the public offices in the University this year, as so many of them held office. Next year we want to carry off everything, in sport.

127 A popular satire column written by Dick Harrison from 1915-25 for what was then the Saskatoon Daily Star. For more: <https://archive.macleans.ca/article/1947/5/1/the-joyful-sage-of-windsor>.

128 Yes, this is where the famous phrase came from...it started with a cartoon strip in San Francisco in the early 1900s. For more, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mutt_and_Jeff.

“Father gave me fifty dollars before he left, which should see me through this term. That will make about one hundred and thirty dollars for this term, and for last term about the same, making a total for the year of two hundred and sixty. I am getting this business of going to college, (and incidentally having a good time) down pretty low, as far as expenses go. I think I spent \$350 last year.

“Your loving son,
Bob Cairns.”¹²⁹

John Jr. marries Elsie Thompson

It’s worth pausing a moment in the story here to point out an issue around names. Because of the repetition of names throughout the family history, there are times where it’s necessary to explain just who is who. Both John Jr. and his brother Bob marry women named Elsie. Bob eventually marries his cousin, Elsie Waters from Boston, Massachusetts, while John marries a local gal named Elsie Thompson.

Unfortunately, we don’t know much about Elsie Thompson, except that she marries John in 1914 and dies in 1970.

John is described by his grandson Jim Cairns as having a “wonderful sense of humor, speaking in a serious tone with only his sparkling eyes giving a clue



John & Elsie Cairns at the door of their house in 1914.

129 Letter. Bob Cairns to Alice Cairns. March 14, 1915.



L to R: John Cairns (with eye patch); Elsie (Thompson) Cairns with baby Tom on lap; visiting cousin Elsie Waters (“the other Elsie”); two-year-old Alice with family dog, and Ian & Owen standing. Summer, 1923.

that he was joking.” It might have been more appropriate to say “eye,” since John lost an eye to wheat rust in 1922.¹³⁰

John and Elsie begin their family the year after they’re married, and have six children: Ian, Owen, Alice, Tom, Ruth, and Ben. John increases his holdings from one to three quarters. The family would later move away from Cairnbank in 1929 although son Owen would eventually return.

130 Interview with Jim Cairns. Hewson, Margaret. 2021.

Chapter 10

Christmas Through the Years

A HOLIDAY WAS A TIME TO TAKE A BREAK, however brief, from the daily chores of farm life; to relax, and to celebrate family and friends. And there was no holiday dearer to the Cairns family than Christmas. Christmas 1908 at Cairnbank was hectic, and there was more than a full house:

“...on Thursday...Mr. Marks came for two ducks I was exchanging with him for two roosters. He wanted the ducks for Xmas dinner, when he found them plucked and dressed he stayed to tea. Just as we sat down a knock came to the door, and a cousin’s son of Mr. Cairns walked in. He had been in the west all the fall and was now attending the Normal School at Regina. We have a new station 2 miles away now, he had come on that line. Then John and Amy came; Amy had come to Wapella 23 miles away, her friends at Parkin had gone in for her. So John had only twelve miles to go for her. That was our Xmas eve tea. Janet and Mr. Dickey could not come down on Xmas day, as it was mail-day, they have the post office. We invited a family this time—two McKillop boys homesteaded and sent for their two brothers and a sister to live with them; just young people, the eldest twenty-one, the sister fifteen.

“So with our boys, and Mr. Cairns cousin (nineteen years and six feet two) we had a merry party. I did not give them turkey, because I raised

the turkeys myself. Amy's friends at Parkin gave me the eggs, and the birds were such beauties I want to have a lot next year. I gave them chickens, we cooked four and one duck...

"After dinner Maggie McKillop and Amy washed dishes. I was ordered off in the room to rest; the boys went out to shoot at a target with a Ross rifle. In the evening it was cold, dark and dismal so we persuaded our guests to stay all night; then we had two McKillop boys, Maggie their sister and George McKay, with six of us in our house of four rooms, seven of the male kind and three of us females. Two boys volunteered to sleep on the room floor, we women-folks had one double bedded bedroom, and in the other bedroom—double-bedded and a stretcher too—five slept."¹³¹

Children and grandchildren feature in Alice's account of Christmas Day 1914, though in later years it would be remembered as particularly profound: it would be their last with their son Tom.

"It dawned—ahem—quite bookyfied—bright and clear, no wind, so I phoned up Janet, urging her to come with the children; she dreaded the going home again to a cold house. When the weather kept good after breakfast, I called her again, saying "Come along", so they decided to come. I had a beautiful large turkey, done to a turn, cold roast pork, cranberry sauce, some dried marrowfat peas, which were pretty good after being soaked in soda water, boiled, seasoned with butter and sugar, an awful heavy plum pudding with hard sauce, oranges, nuts and candy, doughnuts—for Janet's special taste—mashed turnips and potatoes, bread, biscuits, baked apples for the children because they were not allowed pudding, giblet gravy and the turkey stuffing was extra good, tomato pickles.

"Then Elsie brought down some gelatine confections to add to the feast. Janet brought some homemade candy. I put the room table in the kitchen and put the two tables together, so that we all sat down together. Janet brought the baby's high chair. Susan sat between Uncle Tom and her Daddy, they kept putting cranberry sauce on her plate, which she devoured before her mother noticed. She carefully watched her Uncle Tom's elbows, pushing them off the table when he so far forgot his manners as to place them there, till poor Uncle Tom expostulated with Janet about his niece teaching him manners.

131 Letter. Alice Cairns to May Waters. February 24, 1909.



Janet, Sadie & Susan Dickey, grandchildren of Alice and J.A. in 1914, Susan as the first-born grandchild was the apple of Alice's eye. Both Susan & Sadie would marry English boys who come to work as farmhands for their grandparents.

“Little Janet beside her mother ate peacefully whatever she was given; the baby in her high chair sucked turkey bones. Her chair shelf looked as though it were prepared for the dog, but they were happy. I put one of our little poplar trees in the room, made its bare branches gay with presents, chiefly those large red and blue handkerchiefs, this climate calls loudly for handkerchiefs, and things for the children; for wee Janet was a pair of blunt pointed scissors, she could see nothing else, such adoring looks were cast on those scissors! They happened to be the desire of her heart. John and Elsie gave them stuffed rag dolls, John had sewed and stuffed them himself.

“Bob came home bright and early on Thursday morning from Saskatoon, this is his third year, he came to the station at Langbank about half past four, waited for a little light, then walked home, about four miles—his presents ran chiefly to handkerchiefs and soap, I am very fond of highly scented soap.

“Before we tackled the dishes, I dispensed the presents off the tree.

“I cooked the turkey and pudding the day before; gave the room mats a thorough shaking and swept the carpet and dusted, washed the kitchen floor on Christmas morning, then ate so much dinner that I have not felt well since.

“About four in the afternoon Janet and family went home, wraps upon wraps and hot bricks enveloping them, they were in a large roomy wagon box on sleighs. The children were all right next day.

“John and Elsie stayed to tea; Tom went off to a Christmas supper at an English family, Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence, and here comes the attraction, two pretty daughters Barbara and Grace. Mrs. Lawrence says she knows someone or has a sister in West Kirby. I am going to see her some day and find out if it is a sister or friend. I enjoyed Xmas very much after all, the children made it pleasant, they were so happy.

“The men had cigars after dinner except J.A.C. and Bob; we call, or Mr. Wrangham and the men call, Papa “the Reverend”; a little Austrian who was working here this harvest called him “Papa”! It sounded so funny. Janet and Tom gave me a fountain pen which accounts for this flowing letter. John gave me a large box of chocolates, which was wrong of him, for I already weigh nearly 200 pounds. Amy sent me a good useful tea cosy.”¹³²

Plum pudding...again

Elizabeth Waters’ now one hundred-year-old English Plum Pudding recipe put to rhyme by her mariner son Captain Thomas Waters makes a reappearance in a handwritten version by her granddaughter Alice. Likely the song was sung while it was being made that day, “awful heavy” though it may have turned out to be.

Another Christmas, Alice writes an entertaining account of a trip to Janet’s, who was hosting Christmas dinner that year:

“Mr. W. [Wrangham] got the big sleigh ready just as he used to before he went home. Last winter I had a different way of going, had a big easy chair in the sleigh instead of a board on two boxes. Geoffrey kept telling Mr. W. how to fix the sleigh as it was last winter. Mr. W. waxed indignant, told Geoff he had fixed that sleigh more times than Geoff, however, the chair was put in. The Rev. Uncle, Bob, Geoff, and Mr. W. sat on the boards, I on the chair. Bert went on his wheel, Mr. Dunne walked and we arrived at Janet’s about 2 o’clock.”

“Janet had cooked two ducks. I gave the children duck’s eggs in the spring, and they consented to have their pets killed for Christmas dinner. She had string beans, canned by herself, parsnips, beets, cranberries, potatoes and pie and pudding, all good, so we stuffed.

132 Letter. Alice Cairns to May Waters. December 27, 1914.

English Plum Pudding for Christmas
(A recipe 100 years old.)

If you wish to make the pudding in which everyone delights,
Of six pretty new laid eggs you must take the yolks & whites,
Beat them well up together till they thoroughly combine,
And be sure you chop the suet up particularly fine.

Take a pound of well stoned raisins, & a pound of currants dried,
A pound of powdered sugar, and some candied peel beside,
Beat it all up together with a pound of wheaten flour,
And let it stand and settle for a quarter of an hour
Then tie the mixture in a cloth and put it in a ^{pot} cloth

Some people like the water cold and some prefer it hot
Although I do not know which of these two plans I ought to praise
I know it ought to boil an hour for every pound it weighs.

If I were Queen of France, or still better, Pope of Rome
I would have a Christmas Pudding every day I dined at home,
All the world should have a piece, and if any did remain
Next morning for my breakfast I would have it fried again.

M^{rs} J. A. Cairns,
Langbank, Cask.

P.S.
To be sung while mixing, to a suitable tune.

No,

Alice Cairns' hand-written copy of the century-old Waters plum pudding recipe. Early 1900s.

“The rest ate a supper of cake and candy and nuts about 8 o’clock. Mr. W. was quite sick for a week after. He took no exercise, and he is a large eater. Mr. W. calls Mr. Cairns the Rev., and Geoff calls him Uncle, So I call him the Rev. Uncle.

“We came home at midnight, in perfect comfort; found the house not very cold, made good fires went to bed and Xmas was over!”¹³³

Chapter 11

A World at War, a Family Grieves

SIX MONTHS BEFORE THAT IDYLIC CHRISTMAS DAY, on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, trouble had begun brewing. On June 28, 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, had been shot to death with his wife, Sophie, by the Serbian nationalist Gavrilo Princip. Princip and other nationalists were struggling to end Austro-Hungarian rule over Bosnia and Herzegovina. This political murder sparked a rapidly escalating chain of events that led to Austria-Hungary declaring war on Serbia on July 28, 1914, and began what would be called the Great War, and the War to End All Wars...World War I.

It would last for four long years, involve all western nations, and span the globe in air, sea, and land combat. Germany signs the Armistice on November 11, 1918, but not before the loss of more than nine million soldiers, the wounding of another twenty-one million, and the loss of ten million civilians.¹³⁴

One of those soldiers was Thomas Christopher Cairns, the twenty-three-year-old son of J.A. and Alice Cairns.

On April 26, 1915, Tom leaves the farm to enlist in the Royal Canadian Army. He is one of the first to enlist from the Langbank area.¹³⁵ As a result, brother

134 *World War I*. History.com. Found 6/28/21 at <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-i/world-war-i-history>.

135 *Popular Langbank Boy Killed at Front*. *The Regina Leader*. November 24, 1916.



Tom in the uniform of a lance corporal in the CEF Artillery or Field Artillery. 1915. Their cap badges were similar to, and derived from, the British Royal Artillery. The leather holster over Tom's shoulder is a bandolier, which was standard British issue from the Boer War onwards. The pouches were designed to contain ammunition. This is the standard five-pouch bandolier, each containing ten rounds of rifle ammunition, intended to defend battery positions from infantry attack. (Description courtesy of Mark Duffy, ww1photos.org.)

Bob leaves the College of Engineering before his fourth year of study, returning to Cairnbank to help his father on the farm.

It is a dark day for the Cairns family. Alice writes in her diary: "Tom started for Bedford, N.S. Papa and I put in onion sets. Deep Sorrow."

Tom travels to Fredericton, New Brunswick, where on June 8, 1915, at age twenty-two, he is deemed fit to become a soldier for the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force. Tom's military enlistment record describes him as six feet, one-half inch tall, 176 pounds, with brown hair and eyes and a "fresh" complexion.¹³⁶ He will undergo training at Fredericton, then in Quebec at the new Canadian Forces Base Valcartier, and then ship out to England to Shorncliffe Army Camp near Cheriton in Kent, which serves as a staging post for troops destined for the Western Front.¹³⁷ Tom Cairns, rancher, will soon become T.C. Cairns, Bombardier #90258. He will be paid one dollar and fifteen cents a day for his service.¹³⁸

136 Attestation Paper for Tom Cairns. June 8, 1915.

137 *Shorncliffe Army Camp*. Found 6/26/21 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shorncliffe_Army_Camp#:~:text=Shorncliffe%20Army%20Camp%20is%20a,during%20the%20First%20World%20War.

138 *Rates of Pay*. Canadian Great War Project. Found 6/27/21 at <http://www.canadiangreatwarproject.com/writing/payRates.asp>.

" 22 Dull & trying to rain. Washed. F. Graves called in evening. Set turkey eggs
Mr Laine went to Landsbank

" 23 Dull. Tom ploughed pig-corral. Mr. Summersby came for gobble & hen
Mr Laine went to S. Plain & Elsie spent afternoon here

" 24 Misty, cold. Tom chopped for Mr. Curtis & John, gave Elsie turkey and pup.
F. Gravesby says to Mr. Rais

" 25 Fine Mr. W., Tom, & Millie went to church in demo Mr. Dickey & family down. Tom looks

" 26 Fine. Tom started for Redford, N.S. Papa & I put in onions sell. Deep Sorrow.

" 27 Fine. Washed. Mr Laine made his table. Papa ploughed all day.
Mr Laine went for meat. Helped John put in potatoes, fence & ditch roots.

" 28 Fine. Ploughing by Papa. Mr W. Harrowing. Windy. John & Elsie down, John took
Mr Laine went out in afternoon

" 29 Fine. Windy. Papa finished a piece of ploughing. Cleaned Tom's room

Alice Cairns' diary entry from April 26, 1915, expressing the family's sorrow at Tom leaving to serve in World War I. Tom works hard right up to his departure. Three days after he leaves, Alice cleans Tom's room.

Duplicate

ATTESTATION PAPER. No. 90258

CANADIAN OVER-SEAS EXPEDITIONARY FORCE. Folio.

QUESTIONS TO BE PUT BEFORE ATTESTATION.
(ANSWERS)

1. What is your name? Cairns Thomas Christopher.
2. In what Town, Township or Parish, and in what Country were you born? Scotsburn Presby. Co. N.S.
3. What is the name of your next-of-kin? Mrs Anne Mulligan. (Sister)
4. What is the address of your next-of-kin? Redford, N.S.
5. What is the date of your birth? 1st May 1893.
6. What is your Trade or Calling? Rancher.
7. Are you married? Single
8. Are you willing to be vaccinated or re-vaccinated? yes
9. Do you now belong to the Active Militia? No
10. Have you ever served in any Military Force? Langbank Rifle Club, Sask.
If so, state particulars of former Service.
11. Do you understand the nature and terms of your engagement? yes
12. Are you willing to be attested to serve in the CANADIAN OVER-SEAS EXPEDITIONARY FORCE? }
yes

J. B. Cairns (Signature of Man).
E. H. MacIntyre (Signature of Witness).

Tom Cairns Attestation Papers. He lists his sister Amy (he calls her "Annie") Mulligan as his next of kin. Though he had no military experience, he was a member of the Langbank Rifle Club.

Description of *Thomas Christopher Cairns* on Enlistment.

Apparent Age 22 years 1 months.
(To be determined according to the instructions given in the Regulations for Army Medical Services.)

Distinctive marks, and marks indicating congenital peculiarities or previous disease.
(Should the Medical Officer be of opinion that the recruit has served before, he will, unless the man acknowledges to any previous service, attach a slip to that effect, for the information of the Approving Officer.)

Height	<u>6</u> ft. <u>1/2</u> ins.	Weight <u>176</u> Vaccination scar left arm (1907)
Chest measurement Girth when fully expanded	<u>38 1/2</u> ins.	
	Range of expansion	<u>3 1/2</u> ins.
Complexion	<u>Fresh</u>	
Eyes	<u>Brown</u>	
Hair	<u>Brown</u>	
Religious denominations	Church of England	
	Presbyterian	<u>Yes</u>
	Wesleyan	
	Baptist or Congregationalist	
	Other Protestants <small>(Denominations to be stated.)</small>	
Roman Catholic		
Jewish		

A portion of Tom Cairns' attestation papers, showing he weighs 176 pounds and has a "fresh" complexion. The signing medical officer deemed him "fit" for service in Fredericton, New Brunswick on June 8, 1915.

A family reunion back East

From June 15 to August 9, 1915, Alice travels cross-country to see her daughter Amy and new son-in-law W.O. Mulligan. She will also have a brief visit from son Tom.

After a several-day train journey, Alice arrives in Bedford, Nova Scotia at midnight. It rains for the first four days, and Alice is clearly getting tired of it by the third day, when she writes, "Jun 22—More rain, mostly rain, pouring rain, all day rain—rain—rain."¹³⁹

Finally, the rain clears, and she goes fishing off a "little very old wharf" where she catches pollock. She fills her days by going into Halifax to order and be fitted for a suit and a blouse, calling on old friends, and having tea at the Deaf Institute. On July 1, she enjoys a "very pleasant" picnic on a cove they row over to.

139 Diary, Alice Cairns, June 22, 1915.



Alice visits her daughter Amy in Bedford, where she also sees son Tom before he goes to war. On this day, he travels from Fredericton, and they have a picnic.
L to R: Alice Cairns, a friend of Amy's, Amy Mulligan, Tom Cairns. July 1915.

The next day, Tom comes from Fredericton in the afternoon for a quick visit, returning early the next morning. That afternoon Alice picks up her suit. On her next trip into Halifax, with her son-in-law, she takes “my teeth” to (presumably) a dentist, leaves them there and picks them up (“got my teeth”) two days later.¹⁴⁰ From these entries, it appears Alice might have had some kind of denture, possibly partial. She also takes in her spectacles for service. She is making the most of her visit to the big city.

For the rest of the trip, Alice and Amy busy themselves with many of the same activities they would have in Saskatchewan—attending prayer services, having teas and dinner at friend’s homes, and going to Ladies Aid meetings. They had an overnight trip to Scotsburn, where the Cairnses had lived before coming west, and where the Reverend had ministered.

Alice leaves on August 7 and returns on the train via Montreal and Winnipeg to Kennedy, where on August 11, she is met by the Reverend in the democrat.¹⁴¹

140 Diary. Alice Cairns. July 5 & 7, 1915.

141 A “democrat” was a simple two- or four-wheeled buggy which served as personal transportation invented around the 1870s. It was not affordable for many families before the 1890s but was popular with professional people for quick trips between towns. Small loads or luggage could be carried in the bed. Because it has no top or cover, in cold weather the driver and passengers used heavy lap robes and sometimes a metal foot warmer, filled with fire coals, as we find Alice Cairns describing in some of her letters. For more: <http://lindbergjce.com/SYRPAAssoc/barn/wagon09.htm>.

Tom Cairns and Geoff Hewson share special times

After he ships to England and while waiting to go to France, Tom visits his mother's cousin Amy (Waters) Hewson and her family several times in Birkenhead while on furloughs, almost 300 miles from where he is stationed at Shorncliffe. Tom's second cousin, Geoff Hewson, recalled those times fondly. It's clear that the younger boy looked up to his high-spirited and brave cousin in uniform who was going off to war:

"I was only 13 when he came, but he treated me like a man... I remember I had a cigarette with him one time, we used to go to Birkenhead Park to feed the ducks, and he used to buy me chocolate bars, which I would get sick on."¹⁴²

They take long walks in the park and by the sea and have long conversations. Geoff has always wanted to farm somewhere and had been considering Canada, the United States and Australia. He grills his cousin about life in Canada and thinks it must be quite an adventure to live there. Tom is quick to dispel him of stereotypes, but equally quick to joke about the frigid winters:

"I used to ask him an awful lot of questions—silly questions, really. I once asked him if he could read and write. I was fond of reading those early Zane Grey books... In my mind, most of the people did not read and write in those hillbilly places. So, I kind of connected that with Canada. Anyway, he laughed and said yes, he could, of course.

"Then I said, 'Well, you say the frost goes down into the ground in the winter seven feet deep. How do you bury anybody who dies?' He said, 'Oh, that's very simple, it is not nearly as bothersome as when the ground is thawed out.' He said, 'There, we always keep a sharp axe in the cemetery tool shed. When anybody dies, we put them out and let them freeze solid, then sharpen them up with the axe, and drive them in with a mallet into the ground.' Of course, I did not believe that. He was quite a joker, Tom was."¹⁴³

142 *Geoff Hewson: Prairies offer joy and grief. Western People.* Hewson, Edith. September 12, 1991.

143 Interview with Geoffrey Hewson. Smyth, Amaret. 1988.

NOTHING is to be written on this side except the date and signature of the sender. Sentences not required may be erased. If anything else is added the post card will be destroyed.

I am quite well.

I have been admitted into hospital
 { *sick* } *and am going on well.*
 { *wounded* } *and hope to be discharged soon.*

I am being sent down to the base.

I have received your { *letter dated* _____
 { *telegram* „ _____
 { *parcel* „ _____

Letter follows at first opportunity.

I have received no letter from you
 { *lately.*
 { *for a long time.*

Signature only. } *J. B. Cairns*

Date 20/2/16

[Postage must be prepaid on any letter or post card addressed to the sender of this card.]

(92358) Wt. W3497.263 2,000m. 1/16 J. J. K. & Co., Ltd.

A war note from Tom to his parents on February 20, 1916. For security reasons, communications were strictly limited to these forms.

On the Western front

Tom serves nine months at the front in France with the 6th Brigade of the Canadian Field Artillery, which had been organized in August 1914 under the command of Major H.G. McLeod. He is on the firing line in the artillery, in continuous action from Christmas 1915 to November 1916. His battery contained six officers and 190 men of other ranks.

Then, likely in one of the fiercest battles of the Somme, called the Capture of Regina Trench by the Canadians,¹⁴⁴ Tom is killed in action on November 8, 1916, in the vicinity of Courcellette, when an enemy shell hits his gun casement.

144 *Courcelette Canadian Memorial: The Somme*. Veterans Affairs Canada website. Found 6/27/21 at <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/overseas/first-world-war/france/Courcelette>.

The Capture of Regina Trench was part of the Battle of the Ancre Heights, fought after [Sir Douglas] Haig made plans for the Third Army to take the area east of Gommecourt, the Reserve Army to attack north from Thiepval Ridge and east from Beaumont Hamel–Hébuterne and for the Fourth Army to reach the Péronne–Bapaume Road around Le Transloy and Beaulencourt–Thillois–Loupard Wood, north of the Albert–Bapaume Road.

The Reserve Army attacked to complete the capture of Regina Trench/Staufen Riegel, north of Courcellette to the west end of Bazentin Ridge around *Schwaben* and Staufen Redoubts, during which bad weather caused great hardship and delay. The Marine Brigade from Flanders and fresh German divisions brought from quiet fronts counter-attacked frequently and the British objectives were not secured until November 11, three days after Tom was killed.¹⁴⁵

On November 17, 1916, the Reverend and Alice receive the news they have dreaded: their son has become a casualty of the Great War. The weather, Alice notes in her diary, is “Fine. Very warm. Terrible news. Tom killed on November 8th.”¹⁴⁶

The Battle of the Somme, also known as the Somme Offensive, was fought by the armies of the British Empire and French Third Republic against the German Empire. It took place between July 1 and November 18, 1916, on both sides of the upper reaches of the River Somme in France. The battle was intended to hasten a victory for the Allies. More than three million men fought in the battle and one million men were wounded or killed making it one of the bloodiest battles in human history.¹⁴⁷

In a letter to a Princeton Seminary classmate which was reprinted in the thirty-fifth reunion of the class of 1881, J.A. tells a fuller story of Tom’s service, what had been his own hopes for his son, and his acceptance of what God’s plans for him were:

“He went to the front Christmas, 1915, and was in continuous artillery action from Christmas till he was killed on November 8th. He never received any injury till the last—when a heavy German shell exploded in the gunpit where they were firing and killed or wounded everyone in the

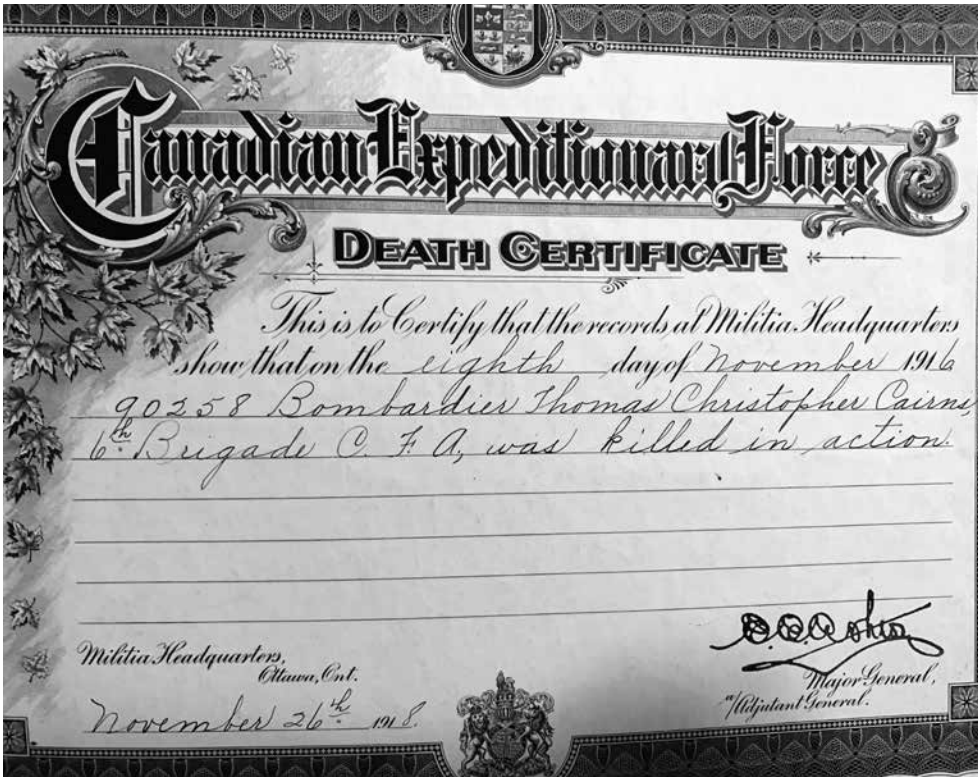
145 Battle of Ancre Heights. Found 11/14/21 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Ancre_Heights.

146 Diary of Alice Cairns. November 17, 1916.

147 *Battle of the Somme*. History.com. Found 6/1/21 at <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-i/battle-of-the-somme>. This site contains images and stories that vividly portray the grimness of trench warfare, and the particular symbolism that the Somme battles represent in war history.

16 Fine warm. ^{Langbank} Plucked 2 fowls. Papa sent butter & fowls to Mrs Spooner ^{Phone call from Mrs Spooner for billie & fowls}
 17 Fine warm. Terrible news. Tom killed on Nov. 8th
 18 Fine warm. Papa up at Blunts, then at Dickey's brought Miss Reighlin dinner.
 19 Fine warmer. No preaching. Annie & Lois went for horseback ride to Robinson's.
 Nov 17. Took Lois & Hitchcock's, John Left-Clair & Jan here to us. Some came over Mrs Dechic

Alice's diary entry on November 17, 1916, the day they learned of Tom's death.



The official death certificate for Tom Cairns.

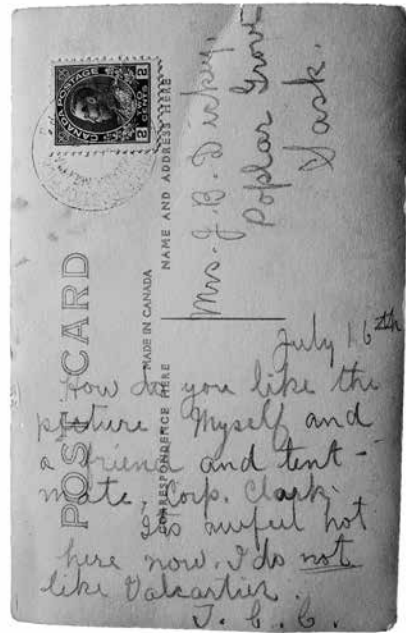
company. He received a few scratches, but nothing to hurt very much. It was the terrific concussion that killed him, knocking him senseless, and though he moved a little for about fifteen minutes, he never regained consciousness before he died.

“He was at home in artillery work, being the man who worked out all positions for the gun, finding the range and firing it. Though between two and three miles behind the British lines and considering that the British and German trenches were seldom more than fifty yards apart, it was fine shooting to set this gun so as to drop the shells in the fifty yards between the two fighting lines. He had to send them over the British trenches and drop them before they got to the German ones. He always excelled as a marksman.

“Next day after his death he was buried in the Government cemetery with a military funeral, along with three privates, an Anglican and a Presbyterian chaplain conducting the service. He was greatly beloved by all his companions in arms—so much so that they raised money to erect a tombstone in his memory. Each grave is by itself with a narrow path all around it and is marked so that relatives can easily find a grave in after years. It is kept in good order by the Cemetery Commissioner.

“No doubt he did a great service during the ten and a half months of artillery service at the front—and not only “did his bit,” but a “big bit,” in gaining the splendid victories of the Allies on the Somme front in France, and in after years we will be proud that we had a son who was worthy and willing to lay down his life for his king and his country; but all the same we will keenly feel his loss for many a day. I had hopes that he would some day fill a room in Princeton Seminary as I did; but such a hope cannot now be.

“...We do not sorrow as those that have no hope—for our boy was ready for whatever happened—and that brings us indescribable comfort; and if he had a part, however small, in ushering in the day of universal peace in the world, and of hastening the day when Christ shall sit as king over all the nations of the world, he may have done a thousandfold more in the war than he could have done here even if he had lived here to old age. There are so many things we don't know, and we can only leave all these problems in the hands of Him who brings good out of evil (even of war) and who reigns and shall reign till all His enemies are put down under his feet.”¹⁴⁸



Tom Cairns with friend and fellow soldier Frank Clarke. On the back of the postcard, Tom expresses his dislike of Valcartier. July 16, 1915.

Tom was close friends with Sergeant Frank Clarke of Millerton, New Brunswick, who is severely wounded from the same shell: wounds to his head and face; a fracture of his left thigh and his left arm that is eventually amputated above the wrist in two operations. The fractured thigh leaves his leg one inch permanently shorter.¹⁴⁹

Frank survives and convalesces at the Hewsons' home in Birkenhead.¹⁵⁰ Geoff Hewson is further enticed to consider emigrating by Frank's stories of Canada during his recovery. Frank never forgets the Hewsons' kindness and when World War II breaks out decades later, he sends them parcels of food from Canada, which are "very much appreciated."¹⁵¹

The Reverend sadly prepares for the one kind of memorial service a preacher never wants—for his own child. It is held on December 3 in Kennedy.

149 Canadian Expeditionary Force Discharge Certificate. P. 13.

150 Upon Frank Clarke's official discharge in 1919, he will receive the Meritorious Service Medal.

151 Recording Transcript by Geoffrey M. Hewson. June 1988. P. 4.

Thomas C. Cairns, son of Rev. Jno. A. Cairns, of Langbank, was killed in action (somewhere in France) on Nov. 8th. He was on the firing line in the artillery, in continuous action since last Christmas, and never received a scratch until the end came. He enlisted in Halifax and was trained at Fredericton, Valcartier and Shorncliffe. He will be greatly missed in the home and among his large circle of friends. The bereaved parents have the heartfelt sympathy of all in the community in the loss of their gallant son, but there is consolation in the knowledge that he made the supreme sacrifice in the cause of liberty and justice.

On Sunday, Dec 3, in the Town Hall Kennedy, at 2.30 p. m., a Memorial service will be held in connection with the death of Private Thomas C Cairns son of Rev. and Mrs. Cairns, of Langbank, who was killed in action. Private Cairns had a large circle of friends and acquaintances, and the service on Sunday next in Kennedy will no doubt be attended by many.

**POPULAR LANGBANK
BOY KILLED AT FRONT**

LANGBANK, Nov. 23. (Special.)—Word has been received by Rev. J. A. Cairns that his second son, Bombardier Thomas Cairns, was killed in action on Nov. 8 on the Somme front. He enlisted in Halifax, N.S. in June 1916, and served at the front for nine months in a battery, C.F.A. Bombardier Cairns was one of the first to enlist from this part and before joining had always been a leader in all local sports and entertainments so that the news of his death came as a personal loss to the whole community, as he was very popular throughout the Langbank district.

The Leader (Regina) - November 24, 1916

Leader Post "Popular Langbank Boy" article and notices of the death of Tom Cairns. Notices are from unknown publications. 1916.

Regardless of their grief and sorrow, life at Cairnbank goes on. Four days later, the Reverend marries James McKillop and Bertha Barrett, and four days after that, he runs against Ernie "Ern" Merkle for a seat on the local council. Alice notes in her diary on December 11, election day, "Papa in as Councillor. Papa—36 Merkle—11."¹⁵²

The war would last nearly two more years, ending on November 11, 1918, when Germany signs the Armistice agreement.

152 Diary of Alice Cairns. December 11, 1916.

The Reverend reflects

In another 1916 letter to his Princeton colleagues responding to a request to update them on his time in the West, J.A. writes a long, thoughtful letter—not much about himself, but a great deal about the changes he has seen come about in Saskatchewan since his arrival there fourteen years prior, in 1902. It provides a portrait of a growing new province finding its way, according to the values and beliefs of its residents at that time:

“...I have not taken any settled congregation for the last five years. I cannot stand the strain of the work; but I am preaching nearly every Sabbath, and enjoy it as much as I did when I first started out as a student from Princeton in the spring of 1879. It seems a long time to look back over these thirty-eight years, but they have been very short—because I have been so busy. I came out West fourteen years ago, and it is wonderful what marvellous strides the Province has taken in these few years.

“Take for example our public schools. In 1907 there were in the Province about five hundred public schools; but now there are over four thousand. We have thirty-one languages spoken in this western country—almost from every nation under Heaven—and these four thousand schools represent thirty-five hundred new settlements formed in the last ten years. It is a great work, to consolidate all these differing nationalities in one great and glorious Province, and this consolidation will come largely through the Public School.

“I remember when the men—the Home Missionaries from the Western States—came to speak to us in Princeton about the needs of the West, I did not understand it; but now I know it. It is the problem of the new country. It is in the melting pot—and what the result will be depends on what we do and how we meet the conditions.

“In this Province nearly two years ago all the liquor bars were closed by the government, who enacted a law in the legislature to do it. It was the most daring thing ever done by any body of lawmakers. It was done without any mandate or note from the people. And the law has been carried out thoroughly, and the people are so pleased with the change that they will never go back again to the old ways.

“In this Province the Sabbath day is well observed—that is, no public work is carried on, except on the railroads, and they do as little as possible. No threshing machines are allowed to run, no seeding or cutting of grain is allowed. The mounted police, or red coat soldiers, prosecute every offender. The red coat is the symbol or pledge of law and order everywhere...”¹⁵³

153 Letter. From J.A. Cairns to unnamed. 1916. Reprinted in the Princeton Seminary's 35th Reunion booklet of the Class of 1881.

Chapter 12

Farmhands from Across the Pond

IN 1919, J.A. REACHES OUT TO HIS WIFE'S COUSINS, Amy and Frank Hewson, in Birkenhead, England. The Hewsons have two teenaged sons, Geoff and Brian. From his time spent with Geoff on his leaves in Birkenhead, Tom had reported back to his father that Geoff would do well as a farmhand for Cairnbank.

Geoff, now almost sixteen, has some gardening and farming experience. In fact, teachers from his boarding school, Penketh, had described him in his report card as a “keen naturalist” with “considerable powers of scientific observation.” They also noted that Geoff “has a mischievous strain in him, which, however, lies dormant as long as there is scope for activity in suitable direction.” He prefers helping the gardener at the school to inside activities. During wartime, he enjoys the fruit he sometimes receives for his help at that time of stringent rationing.

As we learned in Section I, Geoff's father Captain Frank Hewson had set his sights on far horizons at an early age, and went off to sea, sailing many times around the world. His stories of other lands aroused a sense of adventure in his son. Geoff was also inspired by written accounts of the West:

“My early interest in the West was awakened too by books and stories by authors such as Zane Gray...Besides that, my mother's cousin, Mrs. Cairns,

PENKETH SCHOOL.			
Report of Conduct and Studies			
of Geoffrey M. Hewson.		aged 13 years 8 mos.	
in the Lower Third Form, which contains		23 pupils, average age 13.2 mos.	
for the Term ending		26th July 1916.	
	Marks in Examination.	Position in Form.	CHARACTER OF TERM'S WORK.
English Subjects.	Scripture	43 14	Has worked fairly steadily. R.S.P. Has worked well. R.S.P.
	English History	53 2	Has done good work. W.M.B.
	Geography	49 4	Quite satisfactory. R.S.P.
	English Literature	65 3	V. fair. Comparison fair J.P.S.
	English Language	45 8	Good R.S.P.
	Reading
Maths.	Spelling and Dictation	53 8	Good J.P.S.
	Arithmetic	27 19	Works fairly steadily. R.S.P.
	Algebra	60 11	V. fair. R.S.P.
	Geometry	44 12	Rather weak, has worked fairly well. R.S.P.
Science.	Nature Study	96 1	Excellent. Has worked hard & intelligently. W.M.B.
	Elementary Science
	Chemistry
	French	28 11	Rather a weak subject J.P.S.
	Drawing	49 4	Fair; works well. M.P.
	Writing	63 14	Satisfactory. W.M.B.
	Singing

Geoff Hewson's report card from July 26, 1916.

wife of the Rev. J.A. Cairns of Langbank, wrote every Christmas about life in Western Canada.”¹⁵⁴

So, when Geoff receives a letter from Mr. Cairns offering him a wage of three hundred dollars a year, he enthusiastically accepts. In November 1919, Captain Frank is organizing his son's trip across the Atlantic:

“I remember it was quite a palaver¹⁵⁵ getting me ready—my father was always very solicitous about getting everything right. He was a sea captain, and he got a cut on my fare. I came as an immigrant, but through the steamship company we were able to get a cut. Then on the wharf when my parents were seeing me off, he turned to a passenger and told him to look after me while I was on the voyage—to see that I did not get into

154 Transcription of Geoff Hewson Recollections. Evans, Chris. November 1987.

155 An unnecessarily elaborate or complex procedure. Definition from *Oxford Languages Online*.

any trouble. Which the man agreed to, but he never spoke to me—that was the last time I ever spoke to him anyway.”¹⁵⁶

Geoff sails from Liverpool to Halifax, Nova Scotia, after diverting from the intended destination of St. John, New Brunswick due to a strike. He was surprised to find a friendly face at the dock:

“We were supposed to go to St. John, New Brunswick, but there was a strike on there, so the boat was diverted to Halifax. And that is where Amy Mulligan and her husband, he was a Presbyterian minister, met me on the dock at Halifax. They had heard that my ship, the *Metagama*, had been diverted. They took care of me and put me on the train, gave me a lunch. Then I headed for Langbank.”¹⁵⁷

He then takes the train across Canada’s vast territories. It takes a week to get across the ocean, and longer to get to Langbank. He changes stations at Winnipeg for the final leg to Langbank. He arrives at the train station at 7:00 a.m. on a wintry December 4. It would be one of the coldest winters ever recorded. J.A.’s son Bob picks him up...eventually:

“Mr. Cairns had made arrangements with Mr. McClement, the station agent. As soon as I go to Langbank he would phone up and tell Mr. Cairns that I was there, and then Bob would come down and meet me. It took quite a while before Bob arrived, you see, because they did not know what day I was going to arrive, so he wasn’t ready at all. He arrived with a team and sleigh. I remember sitting in that waiting room there. It was a cold day, about -20 F, and the wind was whistling through. That has always been in my mind all these years. I can still hear the wind whistling through the wires—telegraph wires, I guess.”¹⁵⁸

From a hill northeast of town, he looks down on the farmstead that is to be his home for ten years. At the time Geoff arrives, everything is new, and the area is more settled in terms of people per square mile than it ever would be again.

Geoff loves his first winter in Canada, regardless of the weather. His passions for animals and nature make him perfectly suited for the rugged prairies,

156 Interview with Geoffrey Hewson. Smyth, Stuart. June 1988. P.3.

157 *ibid.*

158 Interview with Geoffrey Hewson. Smyth, Stuart. June 1988. P. 5.



Mr. McClement & Geoff Hewson at the Langbank Train Station. 1920s.

where with enough hard work, persistence and good luck, a young man can make a life. He catches a weasel his first week. He sends away for a course on taxidermy and saves up dead birds and animals. He is happy to learn that hunting and trapping, which he loved as a boy in England, is also a favorite pastime at Cairnbank:

“When I first came to the Prairies the sloughs were black with waterfowl and the skies were full of migrating birds in the spring and fall. Ducks, geese, ruffed grouse and prairie chicken were plentiful. After work and on Sundays some of the other young fellows on the farm and I would practice shooting at gophers or at tin cans set on fence posts.

“Mr. Cairns didn’t approve of shooting on the Sabbath, and I would often lower my .22 rifle out the upstairs window on a rope so that he wouldn’t know I had gone out with it. I soon became a good shot, and like most prairie families we had lots of wild fowl to eat, a staple food for early settlers.”¹⁵⁹



Young Geoff Hewson working on the farm at Cairnbank. 1920s.

Prairie boys often made extra money trapping. Lambert, an orphan boy who also lives with the Cairns family, and Geoff decide to make some money collecting skins such as muskrat, skunk and...domestic cats.

Lambert rode to school on an old grey plug and carried a gunny sack with oats for his horses. His job was to pick up cats around the school barn or livery stable and bring them home in the gunny sack. Geoff's job was to finish them for the fur market. He has a book on how to skin animals, but it is trial and error at first. Black cats bring the highest price at fifty cents.

"All went well until the cat population hit zero," Geoff recalled. "Nobody ever found out where their pets had disappeared to."¹⁶⁰

Geoff makes good use of these skills, and he also quickly learns new ones, such as growing crops and raising livestock, that will become a big part of his family legacy and his life's work. He looks for opportunities to supplement his income and spends some of his free time digging Seneca root, which grows abundantly in Saskatchewan and is used in medicine.

But his most lucrative returns come from trapping muskrat, weasels, mink, and skunks. Coyotes (prairie wolves) earn them a two-dollar bounty plus the profits from the fur and there are certainly enough of them to make a business from.

A pack of wolves

John Stafiej, a man who works on Sam Marks' farm nearby, finds some coyote cubs. Geoff had captured some too, and between them, they exchange stock, breed the coyotes, and sell the furs. John's part in the arrangement ends abruptly when the Marks' children, who had made pets of the coyotes, let the cubs loose, only to feast on the Marks' chickens. But Geoff continues his enterprise with vigour.

Alice writes in 1924, "Geoffrey spends every spare moment getting feed and feeding his eight wolves. They are pretty creatures. A hen died every week till the wolves came, only two since they came. A dead hen is a treat for the wolves."¹⁶¹

His venture really takes off when he sends a coyote fur to his sister Barbara who works at a bank in Liverpool, England. All her friends send for coyote pelts, and at twenty-five dollars a skin, Geoff makes a good profit.¹⁶²



Geoff holding coyote pup. 1920s.

161 Letter. Alice Cairns to May Waters. August 24, 1924.

162 *Geoff Hewson: Prairies offer joy and grief. Western People*. Hewson, Edith. September 12, 1991. P.2.

In June of this year I sent you a list showing you how skins had been disposed of up to March 1926. I now send you list up to Dec^r 1926. Showing how the 5 wolf 3 Skunk & 37 musk rat skins have been disposed of.

Feb 1926. 1 Skunk given to my friend
 Cornuison for selling wolf skins
 a pair Damaged Skunk skin sold = 12-6

May. 1. Skunk skin sold = 1-10-0

May. 8. Musk rats @ 11/6 each = 4-12-0

July 2. Wolf skins @ £5-10-0 = 11-0-0

Sept. 5. Musk rats @ 11/6 each = 2-17-6

" 6. Musk rats @ 10/- each 3-0-0

Nov 1 wolf skin 4-10-0

Balance from skins sold up
 to March 1926 17-0-0

Total received = £ 45-2-0

Expenditure = 6-7-1

Balance due to you £ 38-14-11

You gave auntie May in Jan 6 musk rats
 In June I gave Mr Selver, 1 Wolf
 in Dec

An accounting from Geoff's father Frank as to the disposition of animal pelts Geoff shipped to England for sale, 1926.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE LEFT: The “wolf” pen enclosure showing a full-grown coyote. 1920s.

Geoff proudly displays two coyote pelts. 1920s.

Geoff’s sister Barbara models her new coyote pelt stole in England. 1920s.

Chapter 13

Momentous Trips; Momentous Times

IT'S THE ROARING '20S—the world is celebrating the end of the Great War and optimism for a brighter future runs high. However, for the Cairns family, it begins with getting closure around the wartime death of their son, Tom.

Three years after the end of World War I, in the winter of 1921-22, J.A. and Alice embark on a solemn pilgrimage to Europe to locate and visit their son Tom's grave in France. They are accompanied on their passage by Geoff Hewson who is returning home to visit his parents and siblings, Alice's cousins in Birkenhead. The trip lasts nearly four months, from November 28, 1921, to March 24, 1922.

J.A. and Alice first visit Amy and Frank Hewson, where they spend Christmas:

“Well, here we are at Meols, Geof's lovely home... Barbara is a very pretty girl, & Brian is better looking than Geof, but Geof is still the taller. It seems like a fairy land here, everything so small or so large.

“Dec 23rd. two days before Xmas! I do not feel Christmassy at all, so far away...

“Capt Hewson & Amy are too kind to us... You & Edith could sit & talk & walk & wrinkle your foreheads & faces together as much alike as twins of different ages. I am chilly all the time or would be, only I wear my golf



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:
Barbara "Bar" Hewson,
the eldest Hewson sibling.

Geoffrey Hewson, the
middle child.

Brian Hewson, the youngest.



coat or jersey or sweater, or whatever you like to call it. The weather is mild, I think there is not so much oxygen in the air, so that the combustion in the body is slower, the body heat is less I mean to say.

“Capt H. takes Papa off for long walks each day. I have had a touch of bronchitis & a cold in my head but it is all gone now. Amy had a turkey for dinner on Xmas day, a difficulty arose, no pan to cook it in! and the oven hardly large enough to hold it a pan was borrowed from a neighbour who did not mean to cook her turkey till Monday.”¹⁶³

During this time, there is good news when the Rev. and Alice become grandparents again on December 12, 1921. After nearly seven years of marriage, Amy and W.O. have not one, but two babies:

“Amy’s twin boys! It will have been no surprise to her! She asked Papa when we left if he wanted a boy or girl, Papa felt inclined to say “triplets!” but he said a boy. She will have plenty shirts & barrow coats & sweaters, enough had been given to her.”¹⁶⁴

While in France, the Cairnses visit numerous war graveyards, finding graves of boys lost by neighbors back home in addition to visiting Tom’s grave in Courcellette, near where he was killed. At every stop, J.A. and Alice plant rosemary trees at the graves of the sons of the Poplar Grove district. But their first stop is at their son’s final resting place, which J.A. describes later to the *Winnipeg Free Press*:

“We first visited the town of Albert, and the YMCA drove us to the cemetery at Bicourt¹⁶⁵—about five miles—where our soldier son is buried. It was a great comfort to see the place so well cared for. There were no stone monuments yet—only the wooden crosses, telling the name, the regimental number, and where and how killed. Not a weed was to be seen anywhere. It was sown with lawn grass last summer. The country around Albert is in ruins. The town itself is a vast heap of rubbish...”¹⁶⁶

163 Letter. Alice Cairns to Janet Cairns. December 19, 1921.

164 Letter. Alice Cairns to Janet Cairns. December 19, 1921.

165 Actual spelling is “Becourt.”

166 *What are War Cemeteries Like? Winnipeg Free Press*. March 4, 1922.



The Reverend Cairns at the gravesite of "soldier son" Tom. He & Alice also visited the graves of others from the Langbank area. Winter 1921-22.

They tour Arras, Ypres, and finally, the Calais military cemetery where Alice's nephew, William Gilpin is buried.¹⁶⁷

The sorrowful family is heartened to see the great care being taken of all the graveyards of foreign soldiers.

"This is the only finished cemetery we visited, and having seen one we know how the others are to be treated...it is the noblest and the most perfect setting that any loving hearts or any great empire could desire for their fallen heroes in a strange land.

"At one end of this pathway is the Stone of Remembrance, about six feet long, three feet high, and 12 inches thick. On each side of this stone are

¹⁶⁷ One of Mary Gilpin's sons, named after his father, was a sailor living in New Zealand. He embarks from Wellington, New Zealand on April 1, 1916, with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force and dies from wounds he receives in France on July 29, 1916, at thirty-seven years old.

the words, deeply cut into the material and richly gilded in golden letters: ‘Their name liveth for evermore.’ The stone of remembrance is raised above the ground by two steps of cement foundation. At the other end of this white pathway stands the cross, about 12 feet high, with its outstretched arms, as if shielding the departed ones; and on its side, reaching down from the top, is the sheathed sword.¹⁶⁸

Their sad task completed, J.A. and Alice return to Saskatchewan in March 1922. Geoff comes back to Cairnbank with them, and they also have a new farmhand in tow—Geoff’s brother Brian.

Brothers reunited by farming

The optimism of the buoyant 1920s is evident among the two Hewson brothers, who have decided to make a permanent move to western Canada to own their own land and become farmers. They board in the farmhouse with J.A. and Alice and Bob, who becomes like an older brother and mentor to them. They work hard and learn how to raise livestock and grow crops.



L to R: Brian & Geoff Hewson at Cairnbank with Bob Cairns, who was a mentor and “older brother” to the boys. 1920s.

168 *What are War Cemeteries Like?* *Winnipeg Free Press*. March 4, 1922.

In 1922, with financial help from his parents, Geoff purchases his first land, a half section, from the Canadian Pacific Railway. It is sixteen dollars an acre, the total amount of just over \$5,000 payable over twenty years.

Farming at that time was described by Geoff's grandson Stuart Smyth later in a biography:

“The land was all farmed with horses. Later they had an International tractor with steel wheels which made it rough to ride. It was a good tractor. The fields were much smaller than they are now. There was not as much bluff at this time and what there was only about 4 inches high, because the land had been burned over so many times by prairie fires.”¹⁶⁹

Brian and Geoff are building their own herd, and at one point construct a stable for sixteen horses. Among their early brood stock are Jane and Sallie, good and faithful mares who produce many offspring.

Geoff describes the teams they started with: “The most horses we ever had were twenty-four. Brian used a six-horse team while I had an eight-horse team on a three-furrow tractor plow.”¹⁷⁰

The boys travel back and forth between Cairnbank and their own land. They take dinner from Cairnbank to their land, about five miles away, to plow and clear.¹⁷¹ Sometimes, Geoff takes blankets and food to spend the night on it so he can get an early start in the morning, saving the travel time from Cairnbank. Their days are long and hard, but they keep at it.

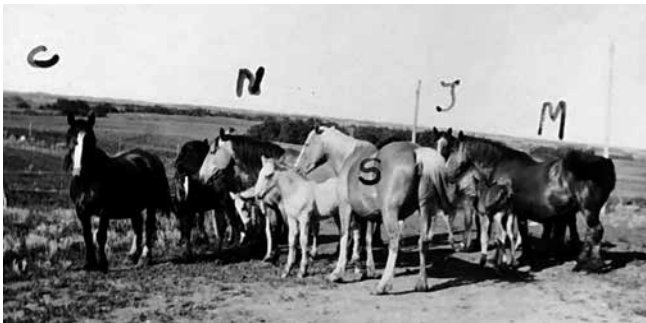
169 *Geoffrey Mark Hewson: A Biography*, Smyth, Stuart. 1982. P.2. Stuart is Geoff's grandson.

170 *The Hewson Family, Langbank Memories*. 1984. P. 327. The horse teams provided the real “horsepower” of the early twentieth century. The modern day “horsepower” depicted by tractors and combines.

171 Diary. Alice Cairns. May 15, 1922.



With the help of their father, Geoff and Brian purchase "15" and commence clean-up of the brush-covered land. The brothers travel back and forth from Cairnbank where they live and work, sometimes sleeping overnight on their land. (TOP) While no house was ever built here, there was plenty of building material for the boys (BOTTOM), from which they constructed a poplar log stable (OPPOSITE BOTTOM). They built up a herd of horses with Bob Cairns. Horses like Christie, Norah, Sallie, Jane & Maude were still essential to pulling some machinery and hauling material. Interest in the boy's farm ventures is demonstrated by this image in their mother Amy Hewson's album, where she identifies some of the horses by initial. (OPPOSITE CENTRE). Of course, horses were also an important means of transportation. Geoff is shown here with Gyp on 15. (OPPOSITE TOP). All images 1920s.



From England, their father coaches them on how to keep accounting records. One of the family artifacts is the accounts book where he helped them set up the categories. And, as supportive as ever—the Cairnses allow the boys to use their implements and horses, while the boys gradually build their own herd of cattle and horses.¹⁷²

List of Implements Bought

Dec 1924	Wheels & rack doubletree neckyoke	\$ 40
June 24 th 1925	Cockshut brush breaker 16 ^{HP} plough.	\$ 83.50.
Aug 16 th 1925	John Deere binder 1/2	\$ 135.00.
March 11 th 1926	Fordson tractor & Oliver plough	250.00.
	(price \$250 paid)	
April 10 th 1928	M ^{rs} Cornick Rearing 15-30 HP with freight \$15	\$1340.00.
Aug 4 th 1928	" " Plough 1/2 our share	\$60
	+ old cockshut scrub plough \$40 total	100.00.
April 6 th 1929	Ford car 2 door price \$860 less \$35	
	= \$825 + \$9 for chains = \$834	
	Geoff paid	30.00
No 9. A 37180.	Brian paid	149.00
	joint account	435.00
	paid	584.00
	Leaving \$ 250 to be paid.	
April 20 th	paid \$100 leaving \$150 to be paid.	
Sept: 7 th 1929	4 furrows S. H. C. plough	216.00.
Dec 15 th 1929	Atwater Kent radio \$129 paid	100.00.
Aug 17 th 1930	Wragham \$50 on wheels clay horses stonets	50.00.
Oct 8 th 1930	Wragham \$36 balance of balance	36.00.
March 14 th 1932	John Deere bisell 12 ft disc harrow \$75 + freight \$5	80.00.
Apr 18 th "	Red weeder	76.00
Oct 15 th 1933	Wood Bros threshing machine 1 st payment paid 1933	150.00
	2 nd payment due fall 1933 for	175.00
	3 rd final payment 1933	175.00
	total	500.00

A portion of a page from the Hewson boys' accounts book, set up by their father, Captain Frank. This page shows the list of purchased implements from December 1924-July 1934. The title is in their father's handwriting, and the entries are in Brian's handwriting, symbolizing the support Frank gave his sons in learning about business.

172 Hewson Family History. Langbank Memories. Hewson, Geoff. 1984. P. 327.

Chapter 14

Summer Visit from Beantown & Birkenhead

THERE IS MUCH EXCITEMENT at Cairnbank in the summer of 1923 when nieces and cousins come to visit from afar. Alice's British cousins, Amy (Waters) Hewson (Geoff and Brian's mother) and May Waters (daughters of Alice's Uncle Benjamin Waters from Birkenhead, England) arrive first. They are expected on May 5, and Geoff takes the democrat to Langbank station on both the fifth and sixth, but, as Alice writes in her diary, "They came not."¹⁷³ Finally they arrive on May 7.

Amy and May are taken to Ladies Aid meetings and are visited by numerous neighbors and family who come for tea or dinner, hosted by the Reverend and Alice. On their first Sunday, Bob takes Geoff, Brian, and the cousins to church in the car, after which they call on Janet.¹⁷⁴ The cousins help with Alice's washing, they travel to Langbank to call on John Jr.'s wife Elsie and they visit Janet, where the cousins have "English gifts" for her.¹⁷⁵ May helps J.A. set out one hundred strawberry plants. One evening the cousins take a long walk with the boys and find a dead purebred calf.¹⁷⁶

173 Diary. Alice Cairns. May 6, 1923.

174 *ibid.* May 13, 1923.

175 *ibid.* May 18, 1923.

176 *ibid.* June 1, 1923.



Geoff (driving) & Brian take the ladies on an outing. In the back of the car, L to R: Amy Hewson, May Waters & Alice Cairns. Summer 1923.

The summer is full of rain and thunderstorms with lightning, prompting Bob to install a lightning rod. Alice's leg is hurting her badly nearly every day. On June 19, they celebrate Cousin Amy Hewson's wedding anniversary.¹⁷⁷

Of course, the primary reason for Amy Hewson's visit is to see how her two sons, Geoff and Brian, are doing with their farm and lives. During the visit, she and May spend lots of time with the boys on their land, even helping with chores. Given the investment their parents have made in the farmland, no doubt their father Captain Frank will want a full report.

The Boston twins arrive

Cairnbank receives more visitors on a cold and wet June 23—Elsie and Edith (Ede) Waters, the adult twin daughters of Alice's brother Benjamin Waters, from Boston. The Reverend picks them up at the Langbank station with the democrat. They stay for about two weeks, leaving on July 9.¹⁷⁸

During their holiday, they pick strawberries and raspberries, attend church, and call on friends and family, in between heavy thunderstorms, "dreadful" mosquitoes, and a car that is out of order. The measles epidemic is making its way through Saskatchewan, and three of the Dickey girls, Susan, Janet, and Sadie have them during this time. On July 8, Elsie and Ede walk to John Jr.'s for a morning visit and take the democrat in the afternoon to visit Janet.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.* June 19, 1923.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.* July 9, 1923.

¹⁷⁹ *ibid.* July 8, 1923.

They leave the next day in the evening, returning to Boston with their new memories—especially Elsie, who will remember her cousin Bob in a particularly friendly way.

Alice diarizes with equal measure the everyday and the special. On July 15, she marks the loss of her “specs in the henhouse.” On the eighteenth, six horses run away with Brian, and they have fresh beans to eat. On the nineteenth, everyone piles in the harrow rig and the car for the annual Poplar Grove picnic.¹⁸⁰

Highlight of the summer

One of the biggest events of any summer after the community hall was built is the Poplar Grove picnic. Amy (Dickey) Reynolds described it in a piece she wrote later.¹⁸¹ The visitors were indeed lucky to be able to attend this event, which would have been much like Amy’s description.

The “picnic” was an entire day of activities and was the “highlight of the summer.” Prepared for weeks ahead of time, people prayed for no rain that day or the day before:

“Either would have meant disaster because the picnic was always held in a flat, grassed area on Neil MacPherson’s farm and could only be reached by roads winding down the hills on either side.

“Poplar posts had to be cut and a concession stand put up with planks around it to make a booth. There, soft drinks, ice cream cones and candy bars were sold by one of the local storekeepers. A nickel or dime would give you quite a choice of goodies then and prizes for the children’s races were usually money, perhaps 50 cents for first 25 cents for second and five cents for third prize.

“Some lunches were sold from the booth, but our family usually packed a picnic supper and drinks. We usually took potato salad and...drinking water in a covered syrup pail.

“There were numerous years when we all went in the wagon, with my father driving the faithful team of Bob and Maude. It was a distance of four or five miles and we got “shook up” but it was all part of the day.”¹⁸²

180 *ibid.* July 15-19, 1923.

181 *The Highlight of the Summer. Langbank Memories.* Reynolds, Amy. 1984. P. 357.

182 *ibid.*

Cousins Visit Cairnbank – Summer 1923



Amy Hewson, with a lapful of ducklings, flanked by her two farmer sons, Geoff & Brian.



Elsie & Edith Waters visiting from Boston, Mass. with pup by log house.



The cousins at Cairnbank. L to R: Edith Waters, Elsie Waters, May Waters, Geoff Hewson, Brian Hewson, Bob Cairns, Amy Hewson, J.A. Cairns, Alice Cairns.



The Boston cousins make a visit to Lawkland Farm in the democrat. L to R Front: Janet Jr, Sadie, Amy & Elsie Waters. Back: Janet Dickey Sr. The trusty steed is Jack who wears a muzzle to prevent frequent stops for grass en route. Ede Waters is the photographer.



The cousins pose under the Cairnbank farm sign promoting "Clydesdales & Aberdeen-Angus." Given their utensils, they are possibly on a berry-picking mission. L to R: May Waters, Elsie Waters and Amy Hewson.

Baseball was a highlight of the day:

“Ball games at the picnic were the biggest admiration of the day for many. The local girls stood around in admiration while the local males flexed their muscles, spat on their hands and limbered up for their great display of skill. Some years, the girls had teams as well, so the crowd’s attention had to be divided.”¹⁸³

There were some cars in those days, and they could be strategically used in rooting for a favorite team:

“If you were in a car, the thing to do was to get your car lined up near the ball diamond where you could sit and command a good view of the games and use the raucous horn to good advantage whenever the team of your choice scored a good hit.”¹⁸⁴

After supper the day closed out with a dance in the Poplar Grove Community Hall:

“A local orchestra would be playing, with piano, sax, violin and banjo, and the music was heady. We danced and danced. After the heat of the day, often a severe thunderstorm came up, but the music was so loud that you hardly noticed the thunder and pretended to ignore the brilliant flashes of lightning. As you danced you thought, ‘I’ll worry about the muddy roads later,’ as inevitably, the thunder and lightning were followed by heavy rains. The rain sometimes, but not always, held off until the dancers had all gone home, usually around 2:30 a.m. when the orchestra called it quits.

“Safely home at last, with light breaking in the east, the birds singing and the roosters crowing, we applied more lotion on scarlet sunburns and were off to a good slumber.”¹⁸⁵

Summer fairs

Late summer in Saskatchewan is fair season, and Alice is an active (and quite successful) competitor for prizes. On July 27, the Cairnses and visitors hit the fair circuit, starting with the Kennedy Fair, where Alice takes seven first

183 *ibid.*

184 *ibid.*

185 *ibid.*



Amy Hewson goes ploughing with Geoff and his seven-horse team. Summer 1923.



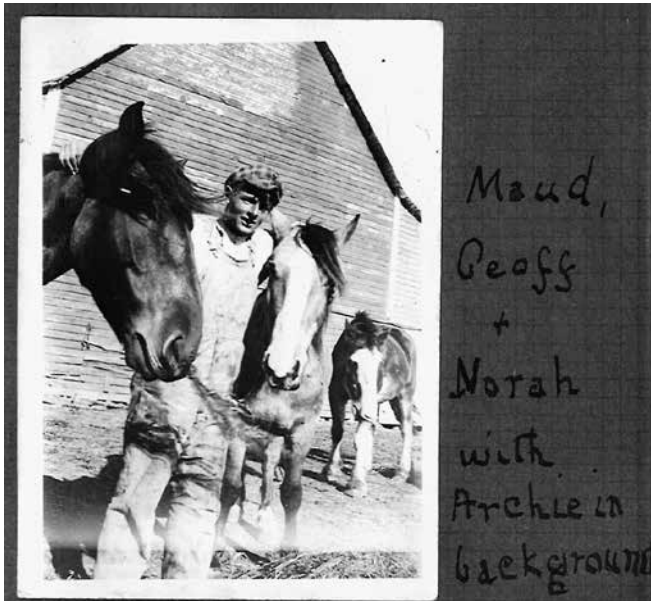
May loads rye into the wagon at harvest time. Sumer 1923.

place prizes, four second place prizes, and a special prize from Eaton's valued at twenty dollars.¹⁸⁶

The next day is a day off and the cousins are weeding the "overgrown garden." In early August, they attend the Fairmede Fair on the seventh, where Alice takes twelve first-place prizes. The day is dampened, however, by a "collision with Mr. Kidd's car."¹⁸⁷ On August 8 they go to the Whitewood Fair, where Alice takes nine first prizes, three second prizes, and one third. And on the ninth, Bob takes Alice, May, and Amy to the Wapella Fair, where Alice wins eleven firsts

186 Diary. Alice Cairns. July 27, 1923.

187 *ibid.* August 7, 1923.



Amy loves the Cairnbank horses and remembers them for years. This is her annotation next to the photo. L to R: Maud, Geoff, Norah and Archie. Summer 1923.

and one second prize. On the fifteenth they celebrate Janet's fortieth birthday. Alice churns and packs butter for May and Amy. J.A. and Bob are cutting hay.¹⁸⁸

Though they're city women, Amy and May seem to enjoy pitching in to help the boys on the farm in August. Geoff and Brian are cutting scrub and discing. Rye is being threshed, and May and Amy help with stooking and loading the grain.¹⁸⁹ Amy comes to know all the names of the horses and teams on the farm, and for years afterward she will ask about them in her letters to Geoff.

Amy and May's three-month stay comes to an end on August 20, when Bob takes them to the Langbank Station to get their train.

It has been a wonderful experience for all. Two days after their departure, Alice describes herself as "rather lonely."¹⁹⁰ But she always has her farm animals to keep her company, especially her geese, which she names:

"Oh, but the goosies! 14 lovely big fellows seven white and seven grey. Quillena is the old goose, Dodo the young one, Aineas the gander. They

188 *ibid.* August 18, 1923.

189 *ibid.*

190 *ibid.* August 22, 1923.



Alice's "goosies" wander the yard at Cairnbank. 1923.

don't know their names, I am sorry to say. I had 25 turkeys, but each turkey lost one, and one died to benefit the wolves. A hen hatched six and has brought them to the age of "shooting the red," that is getting their necks all ugly and goose fleshed. One rooster troubadours the same as ever, sometimes it gets on my nerves and I drive him off, he looks so indignant. Peter is quite a good dog; I think she will have a family some day."¹⁹¹

Injuries and illness bother Alice throughout the years, but like most prairie farmwives, they don't slow her down. A fruit and vegetable harvest would have been much easier without two broken ribs, but it still got done:

"We have more peas and beans this year and loads of beets, carrots, parsnips and turnips and cabbages, not any corn and few tomatoes. We have had rasps three times for tea, and many more are ripening out of our garden. That big raspberry field we went to last year was burned over. We might have had some garden straws, but the birds took them, and I broke a rib just when the wild ones were ready and could not bend, so we only had the wild straws once. When that rib got well, I broke another almost kept me from going to the fairs."¹⁹²

191 Letter. Alice Cairns to May Waters. August 24, 1924. P.2.

192 *ibid.* P.1.

Over and over, Alice shows amazing resilience in the face of obstacles—it was as if she was born to be a prairie pioneer rather than a genteel urban wife.

Epic tours, east and west

Travel (especially to visit family) remains a popular antidote to the tough times. For prairie farmers, winter is the preferred time for vacationing, and as the Rev. and Alice get older, they take several trips, one across eastern Canada and back to the Maritimes in 1925, and two trips to the west coast, one in 1929-30 and one in 1930-31.

In the summer of 1925, the Reverend and Alice travel out east stopping in numerous spots, including Winnipeg, Toronto, Charlottetown and Scotsburn.

In Winnipeg, they visit friends, then take the train to Sault Ste. Marie where they travel by the ship *Harmonie* through what is likely the Soo Locks. Alice loves the boat, much preferring it to the train trip:

“Such a lovely trip! Just perfectly beautiful! A very comfortable stateroom, the best of food. You would never know you were on a boat, no more pulsing than one’s own heart. This morning early we went through the Sault St. Marie or some such lock, squeezed through, it seemed to me, then down a canal at lunch time. I find no one takes a noonday dinner, it is all lunch...The train was very rough & uncomfortable from Winnipeg to where we took the boat, though it seemed like a Pullman car, but it was heavily laden, we were bumped thumped & thoroughly shaken, I never slept a wink, it thundered & poured and such sharp lightening. I hope my goslings are safe.”¹⁹³

The trip has been prompted by the Reverend’s attendance at the meeting and vote for the formation of the United Church of Canada, which occurs on June 10 in the Arena Gardens at 78 Mutual Street in Toronto.¹⁹⁴

That J.A. and Alice were present at this momentous event in Canadian history is relevant; it would shape the church life of the family for the next century:

193 Letter. Alice Cairns to Bob and Janet Cairns. Undated. Sent in same envelope as letter dated June 23, 1925.

194 The building had hosted many momentous occasions before this, having served as the home of Toronto’s first professional ice hockey team in 1906; world welterweight championship matches in 1900-01; one of the first motor car shows in 1906. Informal seating for summer church events could hold up to 5,000 participants. Found 7/8/22 at <https://taylortonhistory.com/2016/04/27/arena-gardens-mutual-street-arena-now-demolished/>.



Commissioners and delegates attending the inaugural service of the United Church of Canada held in Mutual Street Arena, Toronto (June 10, 1925). The United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto. Creative Commons License 92.185P330N.

“The United Church was inaugurated on June 10, 1925, in Toronto, Ontario, when the Methodist Church, Canada, the Congregational Union of Canada and 70 percent of the Presbyterian Church of Canada entered into a union. Also joining was the small General Council of Union Churches, centred largely in Western Canada. It was the first union of churches in the world to cross historical denominational lines and received international acclaim. Each of the founding churches had a long history in Canada prior to 1925. The movement for church union began with the desire to coordinate ministry in the vast Canadian northwest and for collaboration in overseas missions. Congregations in Indigenous communities from each of the original denominations were an important factor in the effort toward church union.”¹⁹⁵

In a letter to daughter Janet and granddaughter Susan after this event, Alice writes, “Very hot in Toronto, funny to see respectable ministers like Dr. Henderson & Papa in their shirt sleeves at the evening meetings, but they all did it.”¹⁹⁶

195 *History of The United Church of Canada*. Found 5/26/22 at <https://united-church.ca/community-faith/welcome-united-church-canada/history-united-church-canada>.

196 Letter. Alice Cairns to Janet (Cairns) Dickey and granddaughter Susan Dickey. June 23, 1925.

The Reverend and Alice take advantage of the business trip to continue eastward to Charlottetown, where they visit Amy and the Reverend Mulligan and their four-year-old twin boys:

“Mr. William Orr is out walking with the boys Amy is working at a dress for herself, it is about 8 in the evening, we have a good wood fire in the grate in the library...Such a delightful trip on the Lakes so smooth such a good stateroom, delicious food, pleasant people...The boys are a happy bright pair, well shaped heads, stutter some because they can't make their speech keep up with their thoughts.”¹⁹⁷

Two years later, in December 1927, the Reverend and Alice again travel eastward, this time to visit Alice's brother Ben Waters and his family which includes Elsie and Ede Waters, in Wareham, Massachusetts. They also see Alice's sister Amy (Waters) Huxley and her daughter Hazel. They celebrate Christmas Day at the Ben Waters home, where Amy Huxley is also a guest. They return in mid-February 1928, and Alice notes that a gift for their grandson Ben Waters Cairns, John's son, is deposited in the bank: ten dollars from Ben Waters in Wareham to his namesake.¹⁹⁸

The final two trips the Cairnses will make will both be west, to visit friends and relatives in Victoria and Vancouver. The first is in the winter of 1930, where they stayed in a rooming house at 808 Blanchard Street in Victoria, near the business area, which Alice describes: “The house is at the upper end of the main streets, to look down the street in the evening is very pretty...”¹⁹⁹

They are content to visit the docks, walk in the fine mist, have visitors, go driving with friends, and especially, shop at HBC (which Alice says “looks like our “Haughty British Cousin”²⁰⁰) and Woolworths. She writes to Janet:

“I do delight in getting things at Woolworth's. Even Papa seems to be more animated about buying when he gets in Woolworths. I mean to get some pretty green salad bowls.”²⁰¹

197 *ibid.*

198 Diary. Alice Cairns. February 18, 1928.

199 Letter. Alice Cairns to Janet (Cairns) Dickey. February 12, 1930.

200 Letter. Alice Cairns to Susan Dickey. February 17, 1930.

201 Letter. Alice Cairns to Janet (Cairns) Dickey. February 12, 1930.



Christmas at Wareham, Mass. Though the people in these images inside and outside of Ben Waters' home are not identified, they likely include Ben Waters, son Benjamin Percy & his wife Florence, Ben's late wife's parents, the Dennisons, Amy Huxley & her daughter Hazel, Elsie & Ede Waters and the Rev. J.A. & Alice Cairns, who were visiting at the time. In the bottom left photo, J.A. & Alice (right) may be departing. The two ladies on the left are unidentified. 1927.

One day they attend Parliament: "On Thursday I went with Papa to Parliament, which is sitting now, we had tickets, so we sat "on the floor of the House," of course on chairs."²⁰²

Her signature humour is evident again in an after-Christmas letter:

"There is a full-length mirror in the bedroom here, I was surprised to see how stout I was. Mrs. Gillis is the same size & I thought well, I am not so stout as that! But when I saw myself I was astonished...your loving fat mother, Alice Cairns."²⁰³

Their last trip at the end of 1930 and into 1931 is also to Victoria, where J.A. attends several events. He attends a Canadian Club luncheon at the then-famous Empress hotel, where a "Dr. Oliver" is the guest speaker at the price of

202 Letter. Alice Cairns to Susan Dickey. February 10, 1930.

203 Letter. Alice Cairns to her children. December 29, 1929. P. 4-5.

one dollar. A missionary fundraising meeting is also attended only by J.A., as Alice writes, “only men are to be there, at least pretty nearly only men. . . I am glad I do not have to go as my fancy work is not getting done very fast.”²⁰⁴ In the same letter to Janet, we find a wonderful description of two very different women who are at either end of the rooming hall floor, with the Cairnses in between. It’s an extraordinary example of how Alice could tell vivid stories about the most average of daily occurrences:

“Last evening Papa I were asked to go in to Mrs. Ellis’s room & sit with her for awhile, she treated us to candy & raisins. Mrs. Ellis has the best room in the house, & pays the same as we do. She is slightly garrulous, & when Papa is too, I do not have to talk any. Mrs. McKenzie lives the other end of the hall, & between the two is a wide gulf of dislike. Mrs. Ellis is a would be delicately nurtured and reared saint of the baptist variety, every prayer meeting faithfully attended no papers read on Sunday, horrified by bridge playing, very exacting about all the comforts she can get in this rooming house, must have the best, & always saying so different to what she has been used to. She said some people are always willing to take anything, but she looks out for the best.

“That’s Mrs. Ellis. Mrs. McKenzie is a big hearty scotch lady, her father was a Presbyterian minister, & her two brothers are Presb. ministers in Scotland. Her husband was a lawyer, died three years ago, & I think she feels his loss yet & ever will, she is about 55 & weighs 200 (Mrs. Ellis is no taller much than I, & weighs perhaps 120) & nearly as tall as Papa. She had two children, died about 2 or 3 years old, of whom she cannot speak without tears in her eyes. She plays bridge whenever & wherever she can, & nearly always comes home with the prize, a cup & saucer, box of soap or such like. She takes on anything she feels worth while, like \$2.00 for Bobby Burns’ annual Victoria birthday dinner, quite an extravagance for her. She came in before she went to show us how she was dressed for it, black satin, & a bunch of scarlet geraniums which were over 20 years old she said. Being so big she can dress a lot. She just says she does not like Mrs. Ellis. Mrs. Ellis says she does not care for Mrs. McKenzie because she is so gossipy. Mrs. McKenzie is one anyone would go to for advice & help. Anyway Mrs. Mac. is most companionable & has a circle of friends of

204 Letter. Alice Cairns to Janet (Cairns) Dickey. January 31, 1931.

some social standing of whom she does not brag. Mrs. Ellis has daughters & sons here & there, in England, New Zealand, & Calgary, all married, but she is not on very good terms with her in-laws, she lost a son in the war, & visited his grave in France. Well, that's that. So last evening when we came back to our room at half past nine, Mrs. MacKenzie came in, I make no remarks to either of them about the other, so am able to be friends with both. Life in just this upstairs place is just like a community large or small..."²⁰⁵

In the summer of 1930, out east in Wareham, Massachusetts, the Boston twins Elsie and Ede Waters take a trip to England. As well as doing a great deal of sight-seeing, they stop to visit their English cousins Amy Hewson, May Waters and Edith Turvey. They also take an excursion to Wales.



The excursion to Cilcain, Wales with the Jack Turvey family. May Waters is on the left, and Edith Turvey is in the center. One of the "Boston twins" is the photographer. July 7, 1930.

Chapter 15

A New Family Joins the Clan

WITH THE EUPHORIA AND OPTIMISM of the Roaring '20s still at full steam, another chapter of the Hewson family story begins when a family friend of Geoff and Brian's emigrates from England to work at Cairnbank near the end of the decade.

In 1928, Geoff and Brian travel to England to visit family and friends. They connect with a witty and mischievous friend, Harold Cox, son of their father's friend and fellow sea captain, Captain Frank Cox. The Coxes will become yet another name bound into the Waters line.

Harold's family decides he should return with the brothers to also work at Cairnbank. As he writes:

"I never wanted to go to sea, and my father would have discouraged me if I had. The truth was that I took after my mother in that I was a lousy sailor. I wanted to study art, but my father said nothing doing. He wasn't paying good money for me to go next door [the University Art School] and draw nude women, and anyway, one artist in the family was enough. Apparently, we had a family connection who painted and who owed my father for a loan which he never paid.

“My second choice was farming, but England was in the position that unless you had someone already in the business it would cost the earth to get going. Canada was the logical choice as my father’s friend Captain Hewson had two sons who had already been working for relatives of theirs in Saskatchewan for several years.”²⁰⁶

Harold might have been happy to get away from his previous school life; he had started the equivalent of Grade 12, but wasn’t able to complete it:

“I started...in September 1927 and left at the end of December. If I had passed my grade 12 (which is doubtful), I would have been bilingual, as we had oral and written exams, also Latin, trigonometry and calculus. My school leaving report said, “We feel that Cox has not made the most of his opportunities, given his potential.”²⁰⁷

The journey begins

Arrangements are made for Harold to return with Geoff and Brian in February 1928. He writes:

“I was only 16 and knew nothing of farming, so my wages would be minimal, but I had to guarantee to stay for a few years, because they had had problems with boys leaving as soon as they knew enough to get work elsewhere, where the pay was better.”²⁰⁸

Captain Frank Hewson is a long-time friend and colleague of Harold’s father, Captain Cox, and has known Harold growing up. He assesses Harold’s potential seaworthiness: “I hope Harold is not seasick. The poor lad I thought looked very pale & delicate yesterday. I feel sorry for him. Anyway, perhaps going to Canada will be the making of him.”²⁰⁹

Harold does survive the Atlantic crossing, but his adventures are only beginning. The journey by train across Canada would be full of surprises:

206 *Reminiscences by Harold Cox*. Compiled by Chris Evans. September 14, 2001. P. 9.

207 *Reminiscences by Harold Cox*. Compiled by Chris Evans. September 14, 2001. P. 8.

208 *ibid.* P. 9.

209 Letter. Frank Hewson to Geoffrey & Brian Hewson. March 11, 1928.

“...a big shock occurred when we boarded the train in Canada. I had been told we were travelling pullman, but we climbed into an immigrant car and lived like cattle for 10 days. There were no facilities for washing, only a built-in hand sink, and we were usually short of water. There was also a tank of drinking water with a slow spigot in a different area of the car. The toilets dumped onto the track by gravity and I came to the conclusion that a lot of people had never seen an indoor toilet before, as the seats got so filthy you could not sit on them. All debris, such as papers, orange peels and peanut shells, was thrown on the floor, which was never swept from the time we left Halifax until we reached Winnipeg 10 days later. A lot of time was spent sitting on sidings, waiting for the regular trains to pass.”²¹⁰

But that was only the set-up for the joke that wasn't so funny for Harold:

“I bunked with an Irishman, who eventually happened to see my ticket. He asked, “What the devil are you doing down here? With that ticket you should be with the nobs.” It turned out that Geoff and Brian had cashed in the pullman tickets bought by their parents and bought immigrant tickets, thus making some money at the expense of their comfort. From then on, I used the bathrooms of the pullman class, much to the disapproval of the negro porter who tried to keep me out. I threatened to move in lock, stock and barrel, and as we had already been on the train for four days, he chose the lesser of two evils.”²¹¹

Meanwhile, the Hewson boys had not let their parents in on their money-saving idea. Their mother writes to them shortly after their departure in March 1928, saying, “We miss you very much. Daddy was saying he thought he was even more sorry to see you go than last time...We keep picturing you on your way & we hope you are very comfortable on the voyage.”²¹²

She also mentions a couple of unexpected gifts that she discovered after they left: “What about the potato in the teapot & the egg in the tea canister? I got a surprise but I know it was Geoff.”²¹³

210 *Reminiscences by Harold Cox*. Compiled by Chris Evans. September 14, 2001. P. 9.

211 *ibid.* P. 10.

212 Letter. Amaret Waters Hewson to sons Geoff & Brian Hewson. March 11, 1928.

213 *ibid.*

She also expresses their deep love and reminds them to look after each other:

“We have so enjoyed having you home dear lads. We like to know that you will each help & look after the other—whichever one needs it...I hope you get your gramophone records to Cairnbank safely. It seems a long time since we saw you yesterday. With dear love from your every loving mother.”²¹⁴

Their father writes to them as well, with reminders to behave and love, though he can't resist the parental urge to comment on a faulty job:

“My dear lads, we all miss you very very much everywhere we look in the house reminds us of you but it has been such a real happiness for your Mother, Bar and I having you with us & we are already looking forward to your next homecoming. The only redeeming thing is that we know you are both contented & happy with your Canadian life & it is such a very great comfort to us to know that you are so steady & don't forget to say your prayers my boys. Young men now a days are too fond of drinking, smoking & leading a fast life.

“When I went to get the coal this morning all the wood you had stacked up just inside the door fell down so I had to pick it all out of the coal & clear away a space & restack it.”²¹⁵



The Hewson family gathers at the Liverpool dock to send off the boys.
L to R: Geoff, “Bar,” Frank, Amy & Brian. 1928.

214 *ibid.*

215 Letter. Frank Hewson to sons Geoff & Brian Hewson. March 11, 1928.

Harold gets to work

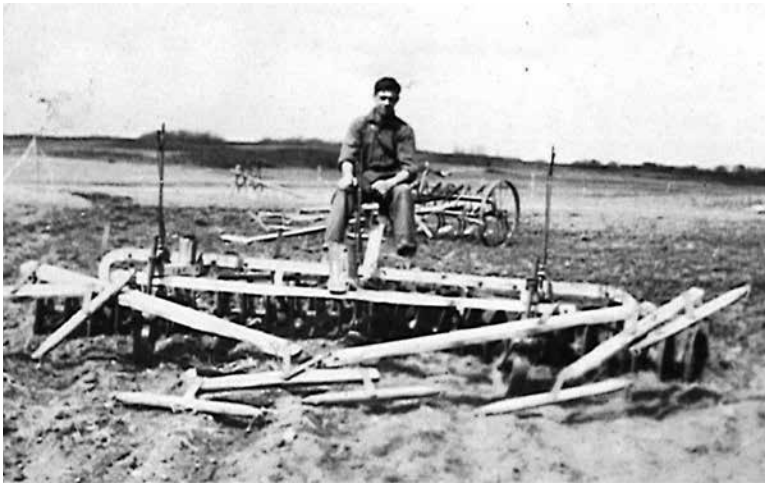
Harold describes his first day on the job at Cairnbank, where he learns his first lessons at the breakfast table:

“We arrived at Cairnbank farm in time for breakfast, which consisted, as always, of a huge plate of oatmeal porridge, very solid and inclined to be lumpy (I hated porridge anyway; we never had it at home), hard-boiled eggs, toast—the slices about twice the size of baker’s bread—and well-boiled tea.

“It was Mr. [J.A.] Cairns’ job to get breakfast, and it soon became a contest between him, Geoff, Brian and me, in which we tried to avoid Bob, dump the tea and make fresh, right under Mr. Cairns’ nose. One of us would pretend to see something out the window and interest Mr. Cairns in that while the other two replaced the tea.

“It was also Mr. Cairns’ job to gather eggs and he was not always too fussy about what he was gathering. One morning Brian cracked his egg and found it rotten. He complained, but Mr. Cairns said, ‘Oh, I don’t think there’s anything wrong with it.’

“Brian promptly stuck it on the end of Mr. Cairns’ nose and said, ‘There—smell it! It’s rotten!’”²¹⁶



Harold Cox on disc, cultivator behind. Taken north of Cairnbank house looking east. 1928-30.



ABOVE: Geoff & Harold clean up at the watering hole. 1928.

LEFT: Harold, Brian & Geoff in front of the house at Cairnbank, and a snow-topped woodpile. 1928.

The Cairnses always aimed at being in the field by 7:00 a.m., after milking the cows, eating breakfast, and feeding and harnessing the horses. Dinner was from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. The crew was then back in the fields until 6:00 p.m. The morning's chores were repeated before supper. After supper they worked at repairing harnesses if necessary, and were in bed early by today's standards, usually about 9:30 p.m.

Harvest time lengthened those hours considerably, as Harold reported:

“During harvest we worked as many hours a day as we could. One very dry year we were able to start about 7:00 a.m. and it was still fit to work till about 9:30 or 10:00 at night. In those days the elevator agent would stay open as late as we were hauling.

“One evening when I was driving the wagon to town, I decided to catch some badly needed sleep since the horses knew the way on their own. Just before town the road crossed the railway tracks. I was jolted from my sleep by the whistle of a train and looked up to see the engine right there. Steam was pouring out as the engineer had the brakes on hard, but the only thing that saved me was that the whistle scared the horses, and they took off.

“The train missed the back of my wagon by about 10 feet and as it went by the engineer was leaning out his window shouting curses at me.”²¹⁷

At Cairnbank, Geoff, Brian and Harold have two bosses. Bob, who is about twenty years older than Harold, is running the farm, but his father J.A. doesn't always agree with him, as Harold describes:

“As a rule, I did what Bob told me, but at times that was impossible. For example, one time I was hauling sheaves and Bob had told me where to build the stack. Mr. Cairns came along and asked, “Why are you putting the stack over there? Put it here.” When I replied that Bob had told me where to build it, he said, “Well, I'm telling you to put it here.”

“In a case like that I usually compromised and when Papa [J.A.] wasn't in sight, I would put it where Bob had said. The result was part of two stacks built and two people bawling me out for doing as I was told.”²¹⁸

One time, the elder Cairns unintentionally sinks a promising sale Bob is trying to make:

“For a while the Cairnses had a Sawyer-Massey threshing machine, consisting of a separator and an attached motor. The drive-belt was too short and consequently the separator would always jam. One day a man had come to buy oats and Bob was trying to interest him in buying the motor. The man was invited to stay for lunch, by which time he still had not committed himself on the motor.

“Mr. Cairns, who was not aware that Bob was trying to sell the thresher, was a great storyteller and over lunch he began regaling the visitor with stories of the problems they had had with the separator. In vain Bob tried several times to change the subject; his father kept returning to it.

“Eventually, after lunch was over, Bob asked if the man thought he would buy the motor. Then Mr. Cairns realized his mistake. “Oh, were you thinking of buying it? Well, you know, I really think our problems were caused by the belt being too short. I don't think there's anything wrong with the motor.”

“It was too late; the sale had been lost.”²¹⁹

217 *ibid.*, p. 7.

218 *ibid.*

219 *ibid.*

Farming has always held its dangers—paying attention while operating machinery can sometimes mean the difference between life and death. And farming with horses presented its own share of frightening incidents, one of which is described here by Harold:

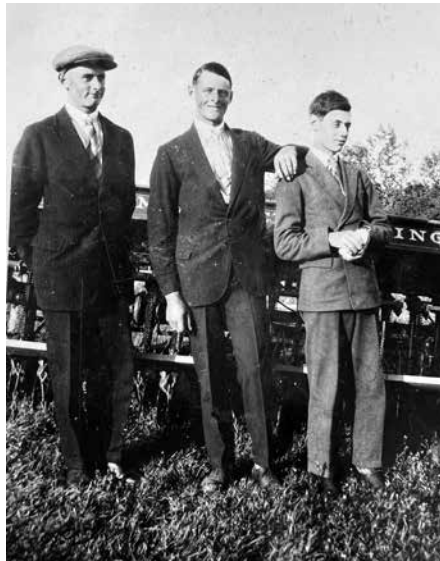
“One time, Reverend Cairns had put a new poplar pole in the hay rake, just long enough for use with the light horses (1000—1200 pounds), which was the team I usually drove. Coming home for dinner, the horses would go on the gallop. I used to get told off for the speed I drove at, but I argued that the horses were still under control and would stop when I told them. Then the team got switched for a heavy team, who were too long for the pole by an inch or so. I had to wire the neck yoke on to keep it from dropping off the end of the pole. Coming home one noon, at a respectable trot, the wire broke and the pole fell down. The rake threw me forward, so I landed running and got the team stopped with no damage. The wire was replaced, and we continued raking. A few days later the same thing happened with the same team, and the same result. I told Bob the pole was too short, and he said to put in a longer one after supper.

“That day I was finishing up the raking and we were going to start threshing after dinner. It took longer than I had figured so I worked late into dinner hour to finish. Coming home, in a hurry I should add, the wire broke and the pole came down. One horse was new to the team and he shied, pulling the other horse onto the pole, which snapped close to the frame. I got dumped onto the ground, still holding the lines, and the team took off.

“I hung on for grim death until I looked up and saw the rake teeth waving back and forth above me. If they came down, I would be pinned, so I let go of the lines. Then the team really took off, still attached to the rake. The rake swung back and forth until finally the wheel hit one horse in the rear. He kicked back with both feet, knocking the rake into the rear of the other horse, who also kicked. So it went, first one way and then the other until the wheel got between the two horses, the doubletrees broke, and they left the rake behind. The horses headed for home, as they usually did, on the gallop, still harnessed together.

“When they reached the yard, the manure spreader was in their path. One horse went around one side of the spreader and the other around the other side. The neck yoke stopped them, and one horse did a complete summersault, ending up facing the other horse. I thought it would have broken its neck, but luckily it didn’t. The rake wheels were horribly bent, my new overalls had a rip from the crotch to the bottom of one leg, and I had a long cut on my left leg from which scarred me for life. Since I was suffering from both shock and a guilty conscience, I offered to pay for half the damage. A new set of wheels cost \$160 at the time, which represented the better part of a year’s salary for me.

“Fortunately, the Reverend took the wheels to the blacksmith who was able to straighten them out after a fashion. However, from then on, if you got a certain part of each wheel on the ground at the same time, the rake would lift and miss a chunk of hay, also the dump mechanism would sometimes jam. When that happened, “Jockey”, one of my fast team, would stand on the spot and prance, finally standing on his hind legs. For some reason, that would usually trip the rake.”²²⁰



Brian, Geoff & Harold in front of a seeder. 1928.



Geoff & Harold at the northwest corner marking of 15. November 1928.

Harold makes a decision

By the end of his first year at Cairnbank, Harold isn't too happy. Pay is low and he is homesick, but he is stubborn and, after a trip home, grateful:

“The first year that I worked at Cairnbank I was paid a salary of \$150. Leslie Campbell, who was working at a neighbour's, was paid \$350. The second year I received \$250, and the third year I was to have been paid \$350, but in June of that year they told me they couldn't pay me that much, and we negotiated a new contract of \$250 from June to June of the following year. The third year I took part of my wages in horses, for which I paid \$5 each per year for their keep, and the Cairnses had the use of them. By that time the Depression had started and there were dozens of men riding the rails who would have worked for just their board and tobacco, so my salary was not that bad by comparison. Of course, the transients would have moved on looking for something better after the hunger pains had been assuaged.

“Compared to the standard I had been used to in England, it was pretty rough. At times I was desperately homesick, especially on Sunday, which was our only day off. There was nothing to ride as the horses were turned out over the weekend, and there were no boys of my age that I could get in

touch with. Besides, I was a foreigner, one of those stuck-up Englishmen. There were times I might have called it quits, but before I left England, an aunt had said, "He'll soon get over that and be hollering to come home." I have wondered since if she knew it was just the thing to make me stay.

"In December 1930, my parents paid my passage for a return visit to England. The U.K., like the rest of the world, had been hit by the Depression. By chance, I met the boy who had always been top in our class, and who had gone on to university; he was working as a gas station attendant. In Lewis's [department store], a girl working behind the counter told me she had to have a Grade 12 certificate to get a job waiting on Grade 8 customers. My main recollection of England at that time was signs saying, "Keep off the Grass," and I couldn't wait to get back to Canada in March 1931."²²¹

Harold has made his decision: he is putting down roots in Canada.

Chapter 16

Next Generation Faces the Depression

THE END OF THE 1920S heralds another major world event: the Great Depression. Deflating the buoyancy of the Roaring Twenties, it begins with a shocking stock market crash in October 1929 that devastates the economy, destroying the livelihoods of millions of Canadians and Americans. It will take a decade for North America to crawl out from under it.

The 1930s become known as the Dirty Thirties,²²² also called the Dust Bowl years, due in part to six years of record droughts, hailstorms, and grasshopper plagues (1930-36) across the prairies, which cause huge crop failures. Tree belts are hastily planted on farms to reduce wind erosion. So devastating are the dust storms that entire households are left covered in a thick layer of dust, so that decades later, some elderly folks who lived through that period always left their teacups upside down on saucers.²²³

222 *The Great Depression in Canada*. Struthers, J. July 11, 2013. *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Found 8/21/21 at <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/great-depression#:~:text=and%20often%20homeless.,The%20decade%20became%20known%20as%20the%20Dirty%20Thirties%20due%20to,rise%20of%20populist%20political%20movements>.

223 *Dusting off the history of drought on the Canadian Prairies in the 1930s*. Colpitts, George, Sunden Bower, Shannon and Waiser, Bill. *Active History*. November 23, 2016. Found 8/3/21 at <https://activehistory.ca/2016/11/dusting-off-the-history-of-drought-on-the-canadian-prairies-in-the-1930s/>.

As the Roaring Twenties wind down and the new decade arrives, the next generation emerges at Cairnbank. The Dickey girls are coming of age and leaving home. Though the Reverend is still involved in farming, Bob is the day-to-day boss for Geoff, Brian and Harold, who have also started their own farms and are stepping up as the new generation of stewards of the farms. Geoff and Harold will also soon marry two of Bob's nieces, which gives him another reason to keep an eye on the young men.

John & Elsie move away from Cairnbank

Bob's brother John Jr., the eldest Cairns son, has been farming nearby on separately owned land. The brothers have habitually worked together at harvest and other times, but John is about to leave Langbank.

Late in 1928, Alice writes in her diary: "John and Bob go to Teddington to see Mr. Thompson's farm."²²⁴ Mr. Thompson is Elsie's father, who is planning to retire. John and Elsie are considering buying his farm, which would mean a move away from Langbank and Cairnbank. Five days later, Alice notes that Bob and the Reverend "talk over affairs" at John's.²²⁵

Then, in early spring 1929, Elsie's father retires, and John purchases his father-in-law's farm, the north half of Section 10-49-17-W2.

The trip takes three days and removes them a world away from what they have become used to in the relatively long-settled Langbank area. This new country is much more rugged; less developed. Ian Cairns recalls:

"In March 1929, my parents, John A. Cairns Jr. and Elsie (Nee Thompson) left Langbank District with two girls, four boys, for a semi-pioneering life in the District of Teddington, Sask. This was a real challenge for a boy of thirteen, from the life in Langbank. Poor roads, 11 miles to the rail head, no telephone, and then the depression."²²⁶

On March 3, the family visits Cairnbank to say their goodbyes to J.A. and Alice and the rest of the family. The next day, Bob and his father go to see their lawyer about buying John's land.²²⁷

²²⁴ Diary. Alice Cairns. November 13, 1928.

²²⁵ Diary. Alice Cairns. November 18, 1928.

²²⁶ *Wonderful Memories 1915-29. Langbank Memories.* Cairns, Ian & Marie. 1984. P. 47.

²²⁷ Diary. Alice Cairns. March 3 and 4, 1929.

Then, the livestock, machinery and household effects are loaded into three boxcars and shipped to Gronlid, eleven miles from the new farm. John and Albert Upton travel on the freight train with the three cars of settlers' effects to care for the livestock.²²⁸

Elsie and her brood of six travel by passenger train, arriving a few days before the freight. Until the house is ready, they stay with her father.²²⁹ Meanwhile back at Langbank, the windows to John and Elsie's house are boarded over, which would be a prophetic symbol of dark times to come.

Jobs are scarce and money is difficult to come by for new farmers like Geoff, Brian and Harold—cash is even tight at established farms like Cairnbank.

In 1929, Geoff and Brian receive \$500 a year between them and have the use of the Cairns' machinery, but after negotiating their 1930 contract with Bob, the boys take a pay cut. When Frank Hewson hears of this, he writes:

“Thank you for the letter rec'd on Monday last & for the copy of the agreement between Bob & yourselves for Jan 1929 to Dec 1930. \$400 a year each does not seem much for each of you for the year 1929 after the many years you have been in Canada but I expect Bob has taken off for the time you have been working on 15. But I am just mentioning it does not seem much when Harold gets \$350 for next year for only \$50 more after all your experience. Anyway you both know if you are getting fairly treated.”²³⁰

The boys apparently do feel fairly treated, and given the times, are likely glad for the income. Though times are tough, Harold is grateful to be in Canada and Geoff is thrifty. The boys will continue to work for Bob and farm their own land at the same time for a couple more years, though they are getting close to no longer working for Cairnbank.

New farmers face extreme hardship

The Depression creates hardship for everyone, including the new generation of farmers. Saskatchewan experiences the lowest price for wheat in recorded history. The province's income plummets by 90 percent within two years.

228 *Cairns Family and Cairnbank History. Langbank Memories.* Cairns, Owen & Hilda. 1984. P. 45-6.

229 *ibid.* P. 46.

230 Letter. Frank Hewson to Geoff & Brian Hewson. November 10, 1929.

Sixty-six percent of the rural population is forced onto relief.²³¹ Land values also nosedive, but the three young men forge ahead.

When Geoff Hewson purchases Section 16-13-2-W2 from Duncan Munro in 1931, he pays five dollars an acre, when fewer than ten years before he paid sixteen dollars an acre for the half section of 15-13-2-W2. It will eventually become his home and base of operations. Harold will also soon purchase land that becomes his home.

The land Geoff purchases, NW-16-13-2-W2, had been settled by the Munro family, who came soon after the Canadian Pacific Railway was built in the 1880s, as Geoff's son Tom describes:

“They [the Munros]²³² had a log house just outside the northwest corner of the old garden to east of present yard. There was a good-sized hill stretching west from the old garden to the present farmhouse, where dugout stables or sheds had been built.

“Mr. Munroe had told Walter Kirkbride, who told me, that when the land agent came out in 1885, the grass-free area in the slough to the south indicated it never went dry, but it was to become dry within a year or two. Today a six-foot ditch across quarter to the west partly drains it.

“Duncan Munroe was the original homesteader on NW16, and his son Hugh got the remainder of the section. After Hugh moved back to Scotland where he died in early 1920s, the land was in the Hugh Munroe estate and rented to the Donnoly Brothers until the 1930s when father bought it.”²³³

Harold Cox has also been busy getting himself set up in the 1930s. With his parents' help, he purchases the land at SE-19-13-2-W2 in 1932 from the Northwest Land Company at a cost of \$2,000. The land title must remain in his parents' name until Harold is twenty-one since a minor cannot own land. To balance the gift of land, Harold takes out a life insurance policy in his mother's name for the same amount.

231 *The Great Depression in Canada*. Struthers, J. July 11, 2013. *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Found 8/21/21 at <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/great-depression#:~:text=and%20often%20homeless.,The%20decade%20became%20known%20as%20the%20Dirty%20Thirties%20due%20to,rise%20of%20populist%20political%20movements>.

232 The contemporary Munros spell their name without the “e” at the end; however, it was spelled in many earlier letters and commentary (like this one) with the “e,” and sometimes also as “Monroe.”

233 *Tom Hewson Stories*. Hewson, Thomas. 2020.

The land has sixty-five acres broken, which he rents to Geoff Hewson for one-third of the crop, as Harold is still working at Cairnbank until June 30.

Harold recalls his first home:

“Bob [Cairns] was building a new house at that time and bought the lumber from Eatons, so I bought lumber with him and put up a 12’ by 14’ shack, of 2-ply lumber with tar paper in between and unfinished inside. Eaton’s made a mistake and sent me a door with a frosted glass panel in it. The carpenter who helped me build the shack, Angelo, was impressed by the door, and christened my place the “Royal Alex” after the hotel in Winnipeg. The name stuck.

I found a battered old cook stove in a junk pile which I put on bricks in the Royal Alex. Later I bought a tin heater and connected the two with a T-pipe. There was a trap door in the floor with a hole dug below for a cellar. That fall I hired Ben Street to help me dig a well for water, we cribbed it and quit as I was going to England on December 8th. We didn’t get water and I abandoned it. From then on I had to haul water from Geoff’s well on the next quarter.”²³⁴

Harold lives at the “Royal Alex” for nearly four years, until the winter of 1933-34, when it is “very cold,” and the shack becomes “untenable.” He makes a deal with John Dickey: he will do chores, drive Elizabeth to school on stormy days, help chop the wood, clean the barn, and water the stock, in return for room and board. They both have about the same number of cattle, Harold takes his cattle to the Dickeyes, and they take turns providing feed for a week at a time.²³⁵

In 1934, Harold’s grandfather dies, leaving him \$3,000. Around that time, Jack Wrangham’s quarter SW-20-13-2-W2, which came complete with a house, comes on the market for \$2,000. Harold describes how he ended up getting it:

“I made a down payment of \$1000 from my inheritance, as I had spent the rest on machinery and a 1930 Ford roadster which I got a good deal on from Elmer Cowan. The remaining \$1000 which I owed Wrangham was to be paid in 4 annual instalments of \$250, no interest. In 1936 I had a very poor crop and the prices were low, with the result that I didn’t have

234 *Reminiscences by Harold Cox*. Compiled by Chris Evans. September 14, 2001. P. 9.

235 *Ibid.* P. 10.

\$250 to pay Wrangham. He gave me a month to pay or he would repossess the land. I offered the Toronto-Dominion Bank in Kennedy a clear title on 320 acres of land, a mortgage on 5 horses, 4 cows, a new binder and mower, plus my second-hand machinery if they would lend me the \$1000 to pay Wrangham. The bank manager said he wouldn't give me 10 cents for the lot, because he had more farms and equipment than he knew what to do with. I was forced to borrow another \$1000 from Dad. At that time the pound was worth \$5.00, so I don't think it hurt my parents as much to give me the money as it hurt me to have to ask for it.”²³⁶

Numerous federal government programs, initiated to help people through the stark economic times, were typically bureaucratic and sometimes needed some getting around. Harold describes an incident in the spring of 1934, where he had asked the Cowans, who were doing custom hauling, to haul him a load of oats from Wapella for thirty-seven cents per bushel:

“The elevator was sold out before I could get back for another load, so I applied for relief feed oats to put the crop in. I offered to pay cash for the oats, but due to government regulations the Council was unable to take cash, so I signed a note along with the application.

“Before the Council would approve the request, I had to sell three head of cattle as I had more than the regulations said a bachelor was allowed, in order to get relief. I argued that since I had wintered my stock without aid and they were now foraging for themselves, the number I had shouldn't make any difference. Government regulations being what they are, it was a case of no sale, no oats, so I sold the cattle for about \$5.00 each. (If I remember right, it was around that same time that I sold a dry Jersey milk cow for 75 cents.)

“When I went to haul the oats, a neighbouring farmer said, “You don't know the ropes. You should have sold the cows to me on the understanding that you pastured them for me till the government forgot, and then we would tear up the bill of sale.” He had done that with his surplus pigs, and that fall was able to sell breeding stock at a nice price to his neighbours.

“In the fall, the government sent me a bill for the relief oats, the price of which was double what I had paid for the ones I bought in Wapella. Take

charity?—not me! I paid them off. My neighbour told me I was a fool, as they would never collect it. He worked some of his off doing road work, and the government cancelled the rest.”²³⁷

Bright spots in dark times

Despite the drought affecting so many farmers across Western Canada, Langbank is on the fringe of it, and although the only rain comes in the form of showers and the crops are small, there is always hay and oats for the livestock. People south of the Moose Mountain Park come to the Langbank area because they are completely dried out. In that regard, Langbank fares better than many other parts of Saskatchewan.

And, despite the brutal economic situation and lack of jobs, the Dickey girls come into their own and fare well. Susan is obviously admired by other family members. In 1930, when her grandmother, Alice, is away in Victoria on her trip, she writes to Susan saying “I am glad to have you at the head of affairs at home. Your loving, but nostalgic, grandmother.”²³⁸



Janet (left) & Susan (right) with their two-year-old sister Elizabeth. Susan, who is just about to leave for her first teaching assignment, is nineteen and Janet is eighteen. 1929.

²³⁷ *Reminiscences by Harold Cox*. Compiled by Chris Evans. September 14, 2001. P. 10.

²³⁸ Letter. Alice Cairns to Susan Dickey. February 10, 1930.

(To be made in triplicate).
One copy to be forwarded to the Department as soon as the teacher takes charge.

GOVERNMENT OF THE PROVINCE OF SASKATCHEWAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

AGREEMENT

BETWEEN TRUSTEES AND TEACHER

Memorandum of Agreement made this 20th day of August 1929, between the Board of Trustees of The Hallsdale, School District No. 1276 of Saskatchewan, and Susan Margaret Dickey of Langbank, the holder of a 2nd Class Certificate of qualification as a teacher in Saskatchewan, as follows:

School Act Section 195 1. The Board of Trustees hereby contracts with and employs for the school of the said district the above mentioned teacher for the period of 210 ^(180 days) ~~days~~, beginning on the 12th day of August, one thousand nine hundred and twenty nine, and ending on the 30th day of June one thousand nine hundred and thirty, at the yearly salary of nine hundred and fifty dollars; and further agrees that it and its successors in office will pay such salary to the said teacher at least quarterly quarterly and will exercise all powers and perform all duties under The School Act and the Regulations of the Department of Education, which may be requisite for making such payment.

Monthly or quarterly as the case may be

2. The teacher agrees with the said Board of Trustees, to teach and conduct the said school during the said term, according to the School Law and Regulations in that behalf.

3. The foregoing is subject to the following conditions:

(1) That the teacher shall continue to be the holder of a legal certificate of qualification as a teacher in Saskatchewan.

(2) That holidays and vacations prescribed by the School Law and the Regulations are excepted from the said term.

Section 195 (3) That the days on which the teacher has attended any school exhibition, teachers institute or convention held under the Regulations of the Department as certified by the Secretary of the Board (not exceeding the number of days prescribed by The School Act) shall be allowed him as if he had actually taught in the said school; and

Section 195 (4) That if the school is closed in accordance with the terms of The School Act by reason of the existence within the district of an actual or threatened epidemic of disease, or in case of the teacher's illness as certified by a qualified medical practitioner, the teacher shall be entitled to receive his salary without deduction for such period as may be authorized under The School Act in that behalf.

Section 196 4. The Board of Trustees hereby agrees to increase the salary of the teacher by the sum of _____ dollars each year until a maximum of _____ dollars per annum is reached.

Notice not less than thirty days Section 195 5. The Board of Trustees and the teacher may respectively terminate this agreement by giving notice in writing to the other party hereto at least 30 days previously.

6. This agreement shall continue in force until terminated by the notice stated above or replaced by a new agreement.

The vacation shall consist of six weeks, beginning June 30, 1930

Susan's teaching contract for the 1929-30 school year at Hallsdale District.

After Susan graduates with her teaching certificate from Regina Normal School, she receives a teaching contract from the Hallsdale District for the 1929-30 school year, for which she is to be paid \$950. This is quite an achievement in a time where teaching jobs aren't plentiful, and expectations are high.²³⁹

239 *It's a Dry Cold! You Don't Feel It!* Marks, Edith. P. 61-3.

Susan wouldn't teach for long—partly because she would soon be married, and partly because her first school year is very difficult for her. At one point her father John says that Susan would “NOT be returning to THAT school.”²⁴⁰

The times make specialized training difficult, but both Janet and Amy launch careers that start with seasonal employment. Janet is fortunate enough to get a job with the University of Saskatchewan Veterinary Pathology Department, where she trains on the job. She does laboratory work in connection with a province-wide program of testing poultry for pullorum disease, then works as a seed analyst and later tests butter. This job serves as a launchpad for a long career. In 1934, Janet describes her first days on the job:

“Tony told me yesterday that she thought I was doing very well, better than most new girls & today Dr. Fulton told me my tests were pretty good, that if I didn't do any worse than that I would be all right. Also, today I was labelling & Tony told Ruth to label with me & see if I would learn any quicker way of doing it. We each started on a new box at the same time & I kept ahead of her! She worked their [sic] last year half-time for two months without pay, just to learn how.”²⁴¹

1. 1021 College Street, Saskatoon,
Sept. 13, 1934.
9:00 AM

Dear folks:

I got your letters this morning. I was beginning to think they must have gone astray. Also the books came. Will you keep that money, Mummy, & buy yourself a birthday present, preferably a dress. And I will expect to see it when I come home. So there! There is fifty cents in an envelope marked "Church" in the washstand drawer in my room. When they are collecting "Mr. Lawton's relay" will you give them that, please.

A letter from Janet to her “dear folks,” while working in Saskatoon at the University of Saskatchewan. 1934.

240 Interview with Heather (Hewson) Gosselin. Hewson, Margaret. September 2021.

241 Letter. Janet Dickey Jr. to her mother Janet Dickey. September 13, 1934. P.1.



Janet Dickey in the 1930s.



Amy Dickey in the greenhouse at the University of Saskatchewan. Undated.

Amy walks a similar path. She writes a civil service exam for the position of Junior Seed Analyst with the Dominion Government in Saskatoon and is hired there in January 1939. To take this position, she leaves a dressmaking course offered in Outlook that was offered through a government youth training plan. In the seed lab, Amy is also trained on the job as was her sister Janet. She learns to do purity and germination work on seed samples submitted by farmers. At first the work is seasonal and Amy is home on the farm in the summer, but later she spends several summers working in the Plant Pathology Lab at the University of Saskatchewan.²⁴²

A number of factors likely influenced Sadie to remain at home. A helper by nature, the kind and gentle girl assists her family and extended family in numerous ways. Elizabeth is still a child in the Depression, but years later will follow her sisters' path to Saskatoon and into the business administration world.

²⁴² *Walter and Amaret (Amy) Reynolds. Langbank Memories. Reynolds, Amy. 1984. P. 345.*

Chapter 17

Boom-Boom Geoff & Go-Getter Susan

THE TWO CHARACTERS who now come into focus in our story are related at a distance—Geoff Hewson and Susan Dickey. Geoff and Susan have a common ancestor, the family story’s first character—Major Thomas Waters Sr.

Geoff is two generations down through the major’s son Benjamin, and Susan is three generations down through his son Thomas Waters Junior. The distant cousins have known each other for a decade and have become young adults together. They are both part of the community of friends and family emanating from Cairnbank, and they will soon become more than distant cousins and friends.

Boom-Boom Geoff

Geoff’s earlier entrepreneurial experience selling animal skins proves useful when he starts another business...and it starts off with a bang.

One of a prairie farmer’s most arduous tasks was picking stones. In 1928, Geoff learns how to use dynamite, which supplements farm income and provides an interesting hobby that really suits his nature—it allows the gregarious farmer to travel and visit, which he loves, and make money at the same time doing something that is practical and hands-on:

“One wet day when they were out picking stones during harvest time at Cairnbank. The rocks were on virgin prairie and hard to get out. So, the hired man asked Bob to get some dynamite to take them out faster. Bob said he did not know how to use it, but the hired man said he knew.”²⁴³

The hired man shows Geoff how to use dynamite that day and, of course, Geoff sees its business potential. He later gets a business card that reads, “Have Dynamite. Will Travel.”

Along with the easy removal of large stones from his own farm, he uses dynamite to break up beaver dams to release water for other farms; to blast old barns so the lumber can be re-used; to blast frozen ground so graves can be dug in winter, and to break up old basement cement cisterns. He even uses



Attempting to remove a boulder with dynamite. Susan Dickey & Geoff Hewson sit in the back, Harold is in the center, and Bob is in front. 1929.



Hewson Explosives business sign. Undated.

243 *Geoffrey Mark Hewson: A Biography*. Smyth, Stuart. 1982. P.4.

it to split heavy twelve-inch by eighteen-inch timbers into three-inch planks and once, to blast out a damaged safe:

“One year a burglar had jammed the lock on the safe in the Langbank Co-op. The safe was embedded in concrete, but by means of dynamite I was able to free it without damage and Jim McIntyre & I took it to Regina to be opened by a locksmith.”²⁴⁴

Though nobody is ever hurt, there are a couple of incidents that stand out in Geoff’s memory many years later:

“In 1955 I was called by the municipal council to blast a beaver dam which was backing up water in the spring. There was a car parked nearby that the owner, unable to drive to his house because of water, had left about 150 yards from the frozen dam. I knew it was in a dangerous place, but as it was locked, we could not move it. There were three or four people present, including Andrew Bruce and Garry, and I told them we were too near, but that we would take a chance, and also after the blast if we looked up, we could easily dodge any falling objects.

“Garry was leaning against the car door when a large chunk of frozen mud came down right where he stood. He saw it and jumped aside, but the mud hit the car door and stove it right in. The car owner, who was not present, was displeased, but the insurance covered repairs.”²⁴⁵

Another time in the mid-1950s, Geoff was asked by the area agricultural representative to dispose of nine fifty-pound cases of deteriorated dynamite that had become unstable:

“I took my half ton truck and put a good covering of hay on the floor of the box. Then we loaded five of the leaking cases of dynamite (50% nitroglycerine) on top and drove from Carlson’s yard to a safe place half a mile away, where I exploded them. The remaining four cases we took to a different site so as not to have too big an explosion. By this time, it was dark, and the explosion produced a vivid flash of flame. At the Carlson farm, one of the womenfolk was milking in the barn. After the bang, the cow pulled back and upset the milker and also the milk. I believe a window was also broken by concussion.”²⁴⁶

244 *Geoffrey Mark Hewson: A History*, Smyth, Amaret. 1983. P. 4.

245 *ibid.* P. 2.

246 *ibid.* P. 2-3.



A building in Wawota, Saskatchewan, being demolished by “Boom-Boom” Geoff Hewson. 1970s.

Geoff says he was always very careful with dynamite and never felt in any danger except once, and even that resulted in more business:

“The reeve of the municipality asked me to blow up some dams in the Pipestone Valley to let the water away, and one of the valley farmers threatened to shoot us. Later he became a good dynamite customer and a good friend.”²⁴⁷

One favorite family story is about a time he was blasting in Janet and Jerry Kessler’s basement.²⁴⁸ He said to Jerry, “Now, there will be a dull thud,” and the next moment a loud bang and the dishes fell out of the cupboard.²⁴⁹

He becomes known as Dynamite Geoff, or Boom-Boom Geoff.

Geoff’s son Robin will help his father and eventually succeed him in the dynamite business until the year 2000. His granddaughter Margaret Hewson says, “My grandpa had a side business doing it, and he loved travelling around and visiting and dynamiting. My dad, Robin, did a lot of dynamiting as well but eventually it was decided that owning dynamite was too risky for the farm and the family got out of it.”²⁵⁰

²⁴⁷ *ibid.*

²⁴⁸ Janet Kessler is Harold and Sadie Cox’s eldest daughter.

²⁴⁹ *Geoffrey Mark Hewson Eulogy*. 2005.

²⁵⁰ Interview with Margaret Hewson. Author. May 15, 2020.

Susan makes her own noise

While Geoff is blowing things up, Susan Dickey is proving how action-oriented and committed she is to whatever she tackles. It's not surprising, given her heritage as granddaughter of the industrious and hard-working Reverend and Alice Cairns.

In April 1929, while she is still a student at the Normal School in Regina, she tells her parents about a luncheon she is asked to organize and prepare for 125 people—normally a large task, but unfathomable with only a day's notice. A play, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, had been running all week at her school, and the principal had agreed to host a lunch after the last performance on Friday for all the cast and everyone helping with the production. He tags Susan for the last-minute impossible mission:

“On Thursday afternoon I was called to the door in the middle of the period. I didn't know what could be the matter, but when I came out I found Miss Pears there. She told me that they wanted to serve lunch... after the performance on Friday. She said she spoke to Mr. Ralston about it, and he said to ask me to take charge of it. Of course I said I would,



Susan Dickey. 1930.

but—lunch for a hundred and twenty-five at a little over twenty-four hours notice! However, we did it.

“I got my committee picked on Thursday before we left school, and had the stuff ordered that night. Next day all we had to do was get it and get it ready. One of the boys with a car brought it up for us. We had nut and raisin bread, as easier than sandwiches, and cake. At half-past five, when we were almost through buttering bread, we discovered they’d only sent us two loaves of raisin bread, where we’d paid for three. I phoned the bakery, and they said they’d send it right up. We thought we could butter it at night. I waited for the boy with the bread so I could leave it in the kitchen, but at half-past six he hadn’t come, so I left.

“We got there at ten o’clock and had the bread buttered before the crowd came out of the aud[itorium]. Then we rushed around serving, and after lunch we danced for about half an hour or so.”²⁵¹

But that isn’t the end of it. The following morning, which is a Saturday, Susan leaves her rooms at the YWCA and returns to the school...and that is only the beginning of her day:

“Yesterday morning, I went back to Normal to see that things were straightened up, then I came back and did my washing. After dinner I sewed for a while on Lizabeth’s dress, then I went over to the library to prepare my speech for tomorrow. Then I went out to Eatons, about five o’clock. I left the films there to be developed last Saturday and hadn’t had time to go and get them...After supper I went down and ironed.”

Susan still had energy when a friend came down while she was ironing and asked her to go out with some friends to a show at the Met, and then some dancing at Orange Hall. After four dances, the group went to the Cameo Café for ice cream. She finally got home at just after 1:00 a.m.

251 Letter. Susan Dickey to her parents, John & Janet Dickey. April 21, 1929.

Chapter 18

Entertainment as an Antidote

IT WOULD BE LOGICAL to think that life during the Depression decade was all doom and gloom. But prairie folk seem to understand that part of resilience isn't just about surviving, it is also about finding creative and fun activities to counterbalance times of drought, dust storms, lack of money, and other worries.

The Poplar Grove district buzzes with activities throughout the year. Among winter pursuits such as skating, skiing, and sledding, the highlight of the season is the Christmas concert. Elizabeth (Dickey) Evans writes:

“Soon after Hallowe'en we would begin to practice songs, plays, recitations and drills. The day of the concert was always exciting because instead of going to school we would go to Poplar Grove Hall for our final practices. Once the hall warmed enough for us to shed coats and overshoes we would go through the program. Norman Hitchcock was usually there to play the piano for the songs and drills, and for many years Mr. Arthur Heal was chairman for the concert. We would go home again in the early afternoon, to get all dressed up and return in the evening with the whole family for the concert, which was always over much too soon to suit us.”²⁵²

In summer, the Poplar Grove Picnic remains a popular diversion, and the rodeo is a newer and welcome distraction from the woes of the world, where the community gathers for fun, fellowship, and competition.

Red-letter days

The Highview Rodeo²⁵³ is inaugurated in a rancher's pasture about sixteen miles south from Cairnbank and Lawkland Farm.

On June 15, 1935, Amy Dickey and her family attend the second annual event. It is postponed by a day because of rain. The six members of the family pack up cakes, sandwiches, the teapot and frying pan, cutlery, and dishes, and set off in three cars.

Eighteen-year-old Amy has an assignment to write an essay about the experience, which is later published in a newspaper. Titled "A Red-Letter Day in My Life," the essay²⁵⁴ shows the early writing talent Amy would develop and gives us a glimpse into what would go on to become one of the longest continuing rodeos in western Canada:

"...The people of the district have built log corrals and a log fence which forms a large semi-circle, with the corrals in the centre of the semi-circle. When we arrived, there were a great many people there already.

"...Cowboys and cowgirls, in colorful attire, mounted on beautiful sleek ponies of many shades of combinations of brown, black and white, were riding about, rounding up cattle. The events, such as steer-riding, had already begun. A steer which had lost its rider came tearing madly past the car just as we were getting out, and I jumped up on the running-board in a hurry."²⁵⁵

At dinner time, free meat and hot tea is given out. The Dickeys light their own fire and fry the meat, which Amy said was "delicious." A band from Maryfield plays, and the riders put on a show:

"...all the riders lined their horses up and marched about in time to the music. How I wished that I were one of them! Other events of the day

253 The rodeo survives into modern times as the Moose Mountain Pro Rodeo.

254 For the entire essay, see *A Red-Letter Day in My Life* at www.mywatersfamily.com.

255 *A Red-Letter Day in My Life*. Dickey, Amaret. Publication unknown. 1935.

were bronco-busting, steer-riding, Shetland pony races, men and women's horse races, steers hitched to carts, and the branding of cattle."²⁵⁶

When the evening is over and everyone has returned home, the event is deemed a great success. Amy concludes her essay with:

"...we spent the greater part of the evening talking over the day's event which we had all enjoyed. Everyone agreed that it had been a splendid day, one to be written in red letters upon the calendar of our memories."²⁵⁷

The courting scene

Beginning back in the late 1920s and stretching into the 1930s, the Dickey girls were growing up and becoming great escorts for the numerous hired men living at their grandpa's who seem very interested in them. There are numerous accounts in Alice's diary of the younger set's social activities, many of which go late into the night...and early the next morning.

They often attend events in groups rather than couples, with the most common group members being Bob, Brian, Harold, Geoff, Susan, Sadie, Janet and another local girl, Maggie Potter. They attend dances in surrounding communities such as Brookside and Poplar Grove; events like church suppers, card parties, choir practices, traveling plays, and the picture show (movies); the annual Masquerade and in the summer, of course, trips to Fish Lake, now called Kenosee Lake.

On April 20, 1928, Bob, Brian, Geoff, and Harold attend a dance in town with Susan. The next day, Alice notes wryly in her diary, "Sleepy boys. Home at 5 AM..."²⁵⁸

On Saturday, July 28, Bob, Brian, Geoff, Susan, and Harold head off to Fish Lake, presumably for some camping, fishing, swimming, and dancing. Geoff, Brian, Harold, Susan, and Janet do the same two summers later, on July 5, 1930.

Predictably, some pairs start spending more time with each other than the whole group. Susan and Geoff are quite often together, and it is clear they are becoming a couple. Bob takes Maggie Potter to a turkey supper on January 27,

²⁵⁶ *ibid.*

²⁵⁷ *ibid.*

²⁵⁸ Diary. Alice Cairns. April 21, 1928.

1929, and they go out again on February 8 and February 10. They go out regularly (with each date noted by Alice in her diary), until early spring 1930, with the last reference to “MP” in Alice’s diary being April 1.²⁵⁹ While this relationship appears to end, a new relationship for Bob will soon appear on the horizon.

Brian often takes Janet to Langbank where she is finishing high school, and seems keen on her, but unfortunately his romantic feelings will ultimately be unrequited.²⁶⁰ They attend a dance with Bob and Harold on March 15, 1929, and the next week the group all go to the annual Masquerade.



The Dickey girls & Hewson boys. L to R: Geoff, Susan, Sadie, Brian & Janet. The girls stay warm cuddling cats. 1929.



Touring 15. The Hewson boys take the Dickey girls on a drive around their farm in a convertible. Front seat: Brian with Sadie (L) & Janet (R). In the back are Susan & Geoff. 1929.

259 On July 31, silver teaspoons for “Bob and Elsie” arrive. By the fall, Bob will be on his way to Wareham, where on November 27, 1930, he and his cousin Elsie are married.

260 Interview with Heather (Hewson) Gosselin. Hewson, Margaret. September 2021.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: On a trip to Regina. From the heights of the provincial legislature building are Brian, Janet, Harold and Susan, who climbed the "234 steps to the top," as described in the annotation. 1929.

On the beach at Fish Lake. L to R: Harold, Janet, Susan & Geoff. Summer 1930.

Bob, Geoff, Susan & Brian enjoy a fire at Fish Lake. Summer 1930.



The Masquerade

The annual Masquerade in Poplar Grove is an occasion to become someone else and kick up your heels. On March 19, 1929, just months before the stock market crash, Janet²⁶¹ and “the boys” are making costumes. On March 22, they attend the dance decked out in their disguises. Bob is a sailor, Harold a gondolier, Brian a safety officer and Janet (the painter), a paint box.²⁶² If only there were pictures!

A costume competition is a feature of the evening, vividly reported on by local media in one of several articles that are glued into Amy Dickey’s scrapbook:

“The orchestra plays a march and as those in costume take the floor, the judging begins. Such a colorful parade! Those who did not mask gaze rather enviously at the others who are now the centre of attraction. The judges make their decisions and the men’s first prize goes to the Mexican who grins pleasantly despite his fierce moustache and beetling eyebrows. The Gipsy carries off the ladies’ prize for fancy costume and the prize for comic costume goes to the Black Mammy. The Clown takes the men’s comic prize.”

“The dance goes on but most of the bright costumes are gone. Two Mounties (really and truly Mounties not masqueraders) appear on the scene and look the crowd over. Do you suppose they are making sure no one takes the Gipsy’s jewels or steals the Queen of Hearts’ tarts?

“Before we realize it, 2:30 a.m. has come and the orchestra plays “Home Sweet Home” as the crowd scatters. The masquerade dance is over. Aren’t you glad you dropped in?

‘Masquerader,’ Langbank, Sask.”

When the group needs to get somewhere, they generally must take the democrat or Bob’s car. In March 1929, though, another vehicle is added to the group’s transportation options.

Geoff buys his first car, a two-door 1928 Model A Ford, for \$600. He orders it from Elmer Cowan, the local car and equipment dealer, on March 5. On March 6, in deep snow, Elmer arrives in the morning to take Geoff and Brian

261 This is Janet Cairns “Junior.”

262 Diary. Alice Cairns. March 19 & 22, 1929.



Brian showing off the interior of his brother Geoff's new Model A Ford. 1929.

to Kennedy where they buy the car and bring it home to Cairnbank.²⁶³ It will turn out to be a good investment:

“It had wire wheels and was very reliable. It got him [Geoff] to places for 20 years. The roads at this time were awful. In the winter even the highways were blocked and everyone used horses to get around or went by train.”²⁶⁴

On April 12, Janet, Geoff, Brian and Harold take a drive in it...apparently a very long drive. Alice notes in her diary the next day, “Home late. A terrible sleepy lot. Very muddy cars.”²⁶⁵

As the car allows them to travel further distances, Geoff, Susan, Janet, and Brian have an excursion to Regina in 1929, 120 miles away.

By fall of 1930, Bob is en route to get married, and Geoff and Susan have become engaged. Apparently, the mischievous Harold Cox may also have

263 Diary. Alice Cairns. March 5-6, 1929.

264 *Geoffrey Mark Hewson: A Biography*. Smyth, Stuart. 1982. P. 2.

265 Diary. Alice Cairns. April 13, 1929.

designs on Janet. Susan writes to Geoff on Christmas Day, “Harold has already kissed Janet under the mistletoe. She said she wasn’t under it, but he said she was near enough.”²⁶⁶

The chautauqua

For several decades, a form of entertainment called the Chautauqua had been all the rage, and Susan and Geoff attend several in 1931, including the Blue Danube Singers and “Her Temporary Husband.”²⁶⁷ In fall of 1932, Harold borrows the Cairns’ cutter to go to a chautauqua, presumably with his girlfriend, Sadie Dickey.²⁶⁸

“Chautauqua” was the name given to travelling tent shows which originated in the USA and flourished in Canada 1917-1935. A summer school, established in 1874 on Lake Chautauqua, NY, with an eye to combining adult education and morally uplifting recreation, adopted the name from its location, and gradually the name came to represent the type of recreation offered.

In 1917 the Canadian branch of Ellison-White (known from its inception as Dominion Chautauquas) booked tours in all four western provinces, playing in forty towns during the summer and 108 towns in the autumn. In 1918, chautauquas took place in 294 Canadian towns, again all in the West. A chautauqua offered different programs for each day of its five- or six-day stay at a given location.²⁶⁹

By the early 1930s the demise of the chautauqua seemed inevitable. The Depression was a contributing factor. More significant, however, was the new availability of radios and automobiles, such as Geoff’s new Model A Ford, which meant that people could stay at home or travel distances to be entertained.

266 Letter. Susan Dickey to Geoff Hewson. December 25, 1930.

267 Diary. Susan Dickey. October 26 & 28, 1931.

268 Diary. Alice Cairns. November 3, 1932.

269 *Chautauqua*. *Canadian Encyclopedia*. Found 8/12/21 at <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/chautauqua-emc>.

Chapter 19

Love is in the Air

GEOFF AND SUSAN BECOME ENGAGED IN 1930, and set their wedding date for June 1931, but they aren't the only family members getting married. Bob Cairns, who has alternately served as older brother, mentor, and father figure for many of the younger family members around him, is also finding romance.

Although, for a while Bob appears to date a local girl, Maggie Potter, at age thirty-five, he ultimately marries Elsie Waters, his cousin from Wareham, Mass. Elsie is one of twin daughters of Benjamin Waters and Cassie (Dennison) Waters. She and Ede had visited Cairnbank in the summer of 1923, and she and Bob had spent time together, at least in the bigger family group. Perhaps this is where the romance was ignited.

Bob packs up and starts for Wareham, Massachusetts on November 15, 1930.²⁷⁰ Bob and Elsie are married in Wareham on November 27, 1930. On December 4, Alice notes "House queerly quiet. Letter from Bob; coming tomorrow." The next day Elsie and Bob arrive with three trunks.²⁷¹

What a change it must be for Elsie after living in Wareham where her father's prosperous businesses and holiday home in Digby likely made life quite enjoyable. She has also left her twin sister Ede, with whom she is quite close. Coming to Saskatchewan not only at the outset of the Depression but also at the beginning

²⁷⁰ Diary. Alice Cairns. November 15, 1930.

²⁷¹ *ibid.* December 4 & 5, 1930.



The bride and groom, Bob & Elsie Cairns, on their wedding day in Wareham, Mass. November 27, 1930.

of winter must have been a difficult adjustment. The sisters do travel to see each other many times after the move, but it is an enormous distance to put between such close siblings: more than 2,000 miles.

And then there is the issue of Elsie's new mother-in-law, the formidable Alice, who may not entirely approve of her new daughter-in-law. The newlyweds are living at Cairnbank until they can build their own house, so the close quarters likely don't help. We don't know the source of Alice's discontent, as it's only hinted at by Susan, but it surely increases poor Elsie's discomfort in her new surroundings:

“Grandma and Grandpa are en route to Victoria; they left Tuesday morning. Elsie didn't get up to see them off, I don't know why. I hope relations were not so strained between them that she was afraid to! I think she would get along nicely with Grandma if only Grandma wouldn't be mean to her, but from what I hear Grandma has made a number of little nasty remarks. Don't tell anyone all this, of course, but I think likely Elsie is glad they are gone.”²⁷²

272 Letter. Susan Dickey to Geoff Hewson. December 25, 1930. P.4.

Alice will soon slow down and won't cook and care for the hired men, and Elsie will take on this significant chore. Elsie has given Susan two tea towels to help stock her new home from the "three dozen" that Elsie owns.²⁷³ She will need all those towels with her new cooking responsibilities, but it's another bit of evidence of the abundance Elsie has grown up with that is missing on the prairies.

Despite all these abrupt changes to her well-established and well-to-do life, Elsie will become a loving and supportive wife to Bob, and a wonderful and loved auntie to the family's children.

When they marry, the bride is three years older than the groom, which perhaps is part of what makes her such a steady and mature support to her new husband, as described by Bob's nephew Owen Cairns:

"Aunt Elsie was a great help to him in his Church work and as the Depression years wore on...a tremendous morale builder for him as she had great faith in the future, which was much needed in those years."²⁷⁴

Bob and Elsie soon build a new home in the same yard as the Reverend and Alice at Cairnbank. The house has a large nursery, but Bob and Elsie will never have children.



The newly constructed and yet unpainted residence of Bob & Elsie. 1932.



Elsie works hard washing clothes at Cairnbank. 1950s.

²⁷³ *ibid.* P.2.

²⁷⁴ *The Cairns Families and Cairnbank Farm 1902 to 1983. Langbank Memories.* Cairns, Owen & Hilda. 1984. P. 44.

Susan & Geoff are next

Susan and Geoff's work ethic and seemingly boundless energy would make them a great team, which they soon become. When they are engaged in 1930, they set the wedding for the summer of 1931. Upon hearing of the engagement, Geoff's mother, Amy, in England writes her counterpart, Janet Dickey, to acknowledge the engagement, and the growing unity of their two families:

“My husband and I are very pleased to hear that Geoff is engaged to Susan and we rejoice in his happiness and think him very fortunate...So the bonds of union between your family and ours are still further strengthened. Bob's marriage also further unites the family. You will all be feeling excited at the near approach of the wedding...Bob deserves the best of wives and we wish him every joy...You will miss Susan at home, but I am sure she is a great help and comfort to your Mother and Father...I miss my boys very much indeed but I am glad that people are so kind to them, and happy to think they will have homes of their own in the future...”²⁷⁵

On Christmas Day 1930, Susan is at home in Langbank in bed with the flu and thinking ahead to her wedding and her new life. She writes Geoff, who is away visiting family in England, saying that friends of theirs were married the previous Sunday and were going to be “charivaried,” a noisy mock serenade made by banging pans and kettles to a newly married couple.²⁷⁶

Susan writes: “I was thinking that if they plan to charivari us, one of us should pretend to have scarlet fever or mumps or something like that so they'd be afraid to come in!”²⁷⁷ She is planning to send to Eaton's for a wallpaper book and will “have the wallpaper all chosen when you get back. By the way, have you thought where you'll keep your guns? In the bedroom, I suppose? I think there'll be more room there than anywhere else, won't there.”²⁷⁸

She shares the update on that week's Amos & Andy radio show and talks about wheat having gotten down to fifty cents, saying, “I wonder how much lower it can go! I do hope it'll be up next year.”²⁷⁹ She tells Geoff about all the presents distributed, and a special story of her three-year-old sister and their father, John Dickey:

²⁷⁵ Letter. Amy Hewson to Janet Dickey. September 4, 1930.

²⁷⁶ *Charivari*. *The Free Dictionary*. Found 9/14/21 at <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/charivari>.

²⁷⁷ Letter. Susan Dickey to Geoffrey Hewson. December 25, 1930. P. 3.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid*.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid*.

“Lizabeth is enjoying her Christmas very much indeed. She has been told that Santa is not really Santa, but she doesn’t take it in and prefers to think of him coming down the chimney. Daddy told her this morning he thought Santa’s reindeer had frightened the cows away, and in a few minutes, she was telling someone else that the cows were scared of Santa’s ‘radiator’!”²⁸⁰

Perhaps the recent wedding of her Uncle Bob and Elsie Waters has her in a romantic mood:

“I wonder what you are doing now? It will be eight o’clock there; perhaps you are writing to me?”

“...I hope you won’t find any other girl over there that you’ll like better than me, for I’m not likely to see anyone that I’d prefer to you. Please write often...Love, from Sue.”²⁸¹

The following spring, Susan is busy preparing for her upcoming nuptials, activities she diarizes. On April 1 she gets material for her wedding dress in Langbank, which she works on for the rest of the month. On April 30, “Elsie turned hem on my wedding dress,” and on May 1, Susan finishes the dress. On May 2, she packs her “things” in boxes. On the fourteenth, she writes out wedding invitations, and on the fifteenth, announcements arrive. On the sixteenth, the Ladies Aid gives her a shower at the community hall and on May 31, just four days before the wedding, she and Geoff go to Kennedy for their marriage license.

Wedding on the porch

On June 3, 1931, the eldest Dickey daughter, Susan, marries Geoff Hewson at her family’s home at Lawkland Farm. They are second cousins once removed. Her grandfather J.A. Cairns officiates in front of about twenty guests on the screened-in porch which is “tastefully decorated for the occasion with blossoming branches.”²⁸² The story of how they get to that point is a special one in the family.

Months earlier, Geoff had written home to tell his mother that he wanted to ask Susan to marry him. After Amy received the letter, she went shopping, purchasing a ring for Geoff to propose to Susan with. To prevent theft, she

280 *ibid.* P. 5.

281 *ibid.* P. 6.

282 From an unknown newspaper clipping on June 8, 1935.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Susan Hewson's engagement ring. The script in the box says, "Oldfields Jewellers Ltd. Old Post Office Place, Church St, Liverpool."

Susan on her honeymoon in Winnipeg. Her new husband Geoff took the picture. 1931.

Three generations of women at the intersection of the Waters, Cairns, Dickey and Hewson names, on Geoff and Susan's wedding day. L to R: John & Janet Dickey, Geoff & Susan Hewson, J.A. & Alice Cairns. June 3, 1931.



hid the ring in a ball of wool and shipped it to Canada. After its safe arrival, Geoff proposed to Susan, and she accepted. But the story of the ring and its romantic power didn't end there. As Deanna Taylor, great granddaughter of Susan Hewson, writes:

“In the 1990s sometime, a stone fell from the ring so my grandmother, Rosemary, had the ring re-done with the stone replaced and the other settings deepened. Growing up, the ring spent its years in my mother's jewelry box and I often admired it. I loved its unique beauty and its history. In November of 2018, my husband proposed with this ring. I love that the nearly 100-year-old ring gets yet another life.”²⁸³

Honeymoon in the 'Peg

After the wedding, the newlyweds depart for a week-long honeymoon in Winnipeg. They get as far as Virden, Manitoba that evening, and go on the next day to Winnipeg, where they stay at the glamorous St. Regis Hotel on Portage Avenue. After their first night, they move to the Wright House, possibly a less costly inn. While in Winnipeg, they go shopping and see several picture shows, including *Svengali*, starring John Barrymore, which has only just opened. On Sunday they attend church in the morning and then see the Winnipeg Grenadiers, a part-time reserve unit of the Canadian Expeditionary Forces. As it is not wartime, perhaps they see them in drills or some form of parade. On Monday they shop again and pack up. They leave Winnipeg on June 9 and arrive back at the farm that evening, where Susan moves in with Geoff and Brian, who have been renting a house from the Wrangham family on SE-20-13-2-W2.

Three days later, on June 12, Geoff and Susan attend a dance in their honour at the community hall and on the thirteenth, furniture arrives.²⁸⁴

283 *Description of engagement ring, and photo.* Deanna Taylor, March 26, 2020. The ring in its original box that made the overseas trip from England hidden in wool.

284 *Diary.* Susan (Dickey) Hewson. June 3-13, 1931.



Susan, a new bride, in the front door of the Wrangham house. An overturned wash bucket gleams in the sun, and the screen door leans against the front wall. 1931.

Newlywed life

Geoff and Brian continue their farm work and Geoff does his trapping and blasting work on the side, the latter of which often takes him away from home. To keep busy outside of her regular activities, Susan indulges her interests in arts and culture.

She is reading new books such as *The Constant Nymph*, *Ann Veronica* by H.G. Wells, *Precious Bane* and *Butterfly*—all novels that feature strong women who overcome adversity. Though *Nymph* was considered “Bohemian,” with then-shocking “sexual content,” they are serious novels that reflect the changing attitudes about the “New Woman.”²⁸⁵

She is also taking painting lessons, presumably by mail order. During the winter, she makes several paintings, including painting a butter box, and plays whist.²⁸⁶

These activities help balance out Susan’s domestic work life of constant clothes-washing, milk-churning to make butter, clothing repairs, and cooking. She makes green tomato butter in the fall, and in December makes apricot ice cream, shortbread, and candy in preparation for the holiday season. Sometimes she goes with Geoff to check traps, or to get wood.²⁸⁷

285 *The Constant Nymph*. Found 7/12/21 at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Constant_Nymph_\(novel\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Constant_Nymph_(novel)).

286 Diary. Susan (Dickey) Hewson. September-January, 1931-2. None of Susan’s artwork is known to have survived.

287 *ibid.*



COUNTER- CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Susan washing clothes. Early 1930s.

Susan & Geoff dressed up for an unknown occasion. Geoff's Model A in the background. Early 1930s.

The couple's first "at home," entertaining the Wranghams, the home's previous occupants. Adults in back L to R: Geoff, Susan, Ivy & Jack Wrangham. Front L to R: Wrangham son Peter & Ivy's thirteen-year-old niece Tena Gravener. Early 1930s.



The previous February, a bout of German measles had spread through the Dickey family, from Janet to Sadie to Susan, and from July through December, Susan reports often not feeling well with flu, headaches, “pain after dinner,” and tiredness.²⁸⁸

One day, she says an afternoon nap “cured headache.”²⁸⁹ Susan naps habitually in the afternoon and is often sick in the evening. The day after Christmas she goes to Kennedy to see a doctor, but there is no explanation of what, if anything, is diagnosed.²⁹⁰

288 Long-term effects of German measles can be “immune amnesia,” where the immune system cannot fight off other illnesses. Perhaps this accounts for Susan’s ill health during this time. For more: <https://www.healthline.com/health-news/the-long-term-effects-of-surviving-measles#Risks-of-measles-infection>.

289 Diary. Susan (Dickey) Hewson. November 1, 1931.

290 *ibid.* December 26, 1931.

Chapter 20

Sun Rises on New Era, Sets on an Old

IN JANUARY 1932, Alice finds out that she will soon be a great-grandmother for the first time. In her diary she writes, “Next Sept. Susan tells us...”²⁹¹ On September 21, 1932, Susan and Geoff Hewson welcome their first daughter, Amaret Alice, named for both her paternal grandmother and her maternal great-grandmother. She is the sixth Amaret born to the Waters line. The doctor arrives at the Hewson’s house at noon that day, and it will be nearly twelve hours of labour before the baby is born. Amaret is the first baby in the family’s next generation.

Her proud great-grandmother writes: “Miss Amaret Hewson arrived shortly before midnight. 11½ pounds.”²⁹² She is born at home on the farm, as are all babies of the time, and given her size it’s fortunate that both mother and baby survive the birth.²⁹³ Alice is also likely to have been worried about Susan, as her own older sister Lizzie (Elizabeth Waters) Gilpin had died during childbirth in 1875. (Lizzie was Thomas and Amaret Waters’ first-born child.)

291 Diary. Alice Cairns. January 9, 1932.

292 *ibid.* September 22, 1932.

293 At the beginning of the 1900s, infant mortality was a crisis in Canada. In 1921, almost one in every ten infants did not live past their first birthday. Without drugs or reparative post-natal surgery, a very large baby can cause fatal hemorrhaging in the mother. For more: <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/birthing-practices> and <https://www.healthline.com/health/pregnancy/complications-uterine-hemorrhage#risk-factors>.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, OPPOSITE:
Susan and her new baby, Amaret,
the sixth one so named in the
family. 1932.

Bundled-up five-month-old Amaret
gets some winter sun, along with
the washing—likely frozen sheets
and clothes. 1933.

Amaret getting more sun, this
time in warmer conditions, in her
highchair. 1933.

The proud aunties of baby Amaret,
who unlike her Aunt Amy (left), will
always be called Amaret. Aunt Sadie
(right) is holding Amaret. 1932.

Dad Geoff smiles from the
hammock at his adventurous baby
Amaret, now crawling. 1933.





The ring given to Alice on her fiftieth anniversary. It now belongs to Alice's great-great-granddaughter Nancy (Smyth) Porter.

A golden anniversary

That summer, while they had been eagerly awaiting the baby's birth, J.A. and Alice Cairns celebrate their golden wedding anniversary at a dinner held in their honour in the Poplar Grove Hall Monday, June 20, 1932. Alice receives a fiftieth anniversary ring that is a replica of the ring her father Thomas Waters Jr. gave her grandmother Elizabeth Waters on her fiftieth anniversary in 1864.²⁹⁴

Below the diary entry is a typed addendum from Amaret (Hewson) Smyth that explains more:

“Elizabeth Waters was the wife of Major Thomas Waters [T.W. Sr.] The gold ring engraved with hearts and flowers which I, [Amaret], have, is a copy of the rings referred to above [Elizabeth Waters' diary entry].²⁹⁵ Mine was presented to Elizabeth's granddaughter, Alice Waters Cairns, at the time of their Golden Wedding anniversary, June 20, 1932.”²⁹⁶

The party is described in detail by the *Moosomin World Spectator*:

“The fiftieth anniversary of this wedding was celebrated at the Community Hall, Poplar Grove, Sask. On Monday afternoon by many of the friends

294 At the party, Susan is pregnant with Alice's first great-grandchild, Amaret Smyth. Amaret Smyth would become the owner of the 50th Anniversary ring. She would give it to her daughter, Nancy Smyth Porter, who owns it now.

295 The diary entry appears in Section 1 and is from September 13, 1864.

296 Addendum to September 13, 1864, Diary Entry of Alice Cairns. Smyth, Amaret (Hewson). January 9, 1932.



Attendees at the Cairns' fiftieth wedding anniversary pose for a picture in front of the Poplar Grove Community Hall.

Mr. and Mrs. Cairns have made since coming to live in Poplar Grove, 30 years ago.

“The celebration took the form of a banquet given by the Community Club for which 125 places were laid and to which friends came from all the surrounding districts. The tables were prettily decorated with white and yellow roses and when the guests were seated, Mr. and Mrs. Cairns entered the Hall to the strains of the wedding march, played by their eldest granddaughter, Mrs. G. M. Henson.”²⁹⁷

After a meal and a toast to the King, the celebrants are given a “suitable address and a beautiful bouquet of yellow roses” on behalf of the Club by Mrs. John Bonar. J.A. responds with a speech, touching on the last fifty years of life and thanking their friends for the “love and kindness” shown to them. The description of the guest speakers reveals an impressive list of clerical leaders and politicians from regional to federal levels of government—including Senator Gillis of Whitewood and W.J. Patterson, M.L.A.²⁹⁸

297 This is a typographical error; it should read Hewson.

298 An “M.L.A.” in Saskatchewan is a Member of the Legislative Assembly, an elected provincial representative.

A year after their golden anniversary, Alice begins to see signs of weakening in her elderly husband. In May 1933, Bob takes him to see Dr. Hilts at Kennedy, who says J.A. has “heart trouble.” Alice also suffers, noting in her diary “mine is worse.”

In June, Amy and her eleven-year-old twin boys, Billy and Tom, visit from out East. Alice notes in her diary: “June 3—It’s hot. Amy, Tom, and Billy Mulligan came. Bob met them at Langbank.”²⁹⁹ The visit is likely a sad one for Amy and is the last time she will see her parents alive. Her father is ill, and she helps her mother:

“June 5—Amy pulling thistles in garden. June 7—Amy and Sadie papered the kitchen. June 8—Papering of kitchen finished. Amy weeding garden.”³⁰⁰

On June 9, J.A. is still trying to work, “putting in tomatoes and corn,” but the heat and his condition make that difficult. A visit from Dr. Hilts finds him “very weak,” and Alice concludes J.A. “must be fed up.” On June 12, she writes, “Amy and I had to attend Papa in the night. Had all his bedclothes to wash.”³⁰¹

The twins are kept busy

While their mother tends to her parents, the twins are enjoying fun activities with their Uncle Bob and others. They play cricket, get sunburned in the bathing pool, go to Kennedy, and play ball with Harold Cox. On June 18, they have a special treat: “Billy and Tom had their much-wished horseback rides.”³⁰²

Owen Cairns retells a story of one of the boys’ tricks that was a bit too much for their ill grandpa:

“Aunt Amy and the boys were visiting Grandpa and Grandma Cairns. The boys put some mud pies which they had made on the table at dinnertime and Grandpa took a bite of one. The rest of the people at the table thought this quite a joke, but apparently Grandpa did not.”³⁰³

299 Diary. Alice Cairns. June 3, 1933.

300 *ibid.* June 5-8, 1933.

301 *ibid.* June 9-12, 1933.

302 *ibid.* June 18, 1933.

303 *The Cairns Family and Cairnbank Farm 1902 to 1983. Langbank Memories.* Cairns, Owen & Hilda. 1984. P.44.

The boys even help with some chores: “Tom was helping up in field fencing, started walking to Hewsons, ½ [illegible], did not get there til 9, got lost got home tired, hungry and frightened.”³⁰⁴

On June 27, the family leaves, and Alice is a bit forlorn: “Amy is getting ready to go back. Mrs. Tosh called in afternoon. Bob took them to the station. June 28—Fine, but threatening. Mr. and Mrs. Potter called. Kind of lonely!”³⁰⁵

The Reverend’s passing

By his seventy-ninth birthday on August 17, 1933, J.A. has good and bad days, but is often not feeling well. Some days he goes to bed without supper. He gets weaker through August, getting headaches and has “dropsy.”³⁰⁶

Nonetheless on his good days, J.A. is still cheerful. On August 28, Alice notes “Papa signed Bob attorney,” possibly meaning he gives his son power of attorney. By October he is often “low” and on the twenty-third, he is vomiting. The doctor visits, and J.A. gets worse. On the twenty-eighth, he is very weak. The day of October 29 dawns “dullish.” Alice’s diary entry for this sad day reads: “...the last dark day of nothingness, the last of danger & despair. Watching, watching, watching. Papa died...6 p.m.”³⁰⁷

Elsie brings an organ for the funeral two days later, on October 31, with “Mr. Revs. Skea, Kerr, Rainy and Pritchard all taking part.”³⁰⁸ The roads are bad; it’s a dull and misty day. Two days later is the first snow of the fall. It is a difficult time for Alice. On November 9 she writes: “‘In Flanders Field.’ Two sad days now.”³⁰⁹ She is remembering her other great loss, that of son Tom in World War I on November 8, 1917, while freshly grieving the loss of the man she had spent most of her life with.

304 Diary. Alice Cairns. June 22, 1933.

305 *ibid.* June 27-28, 1933.

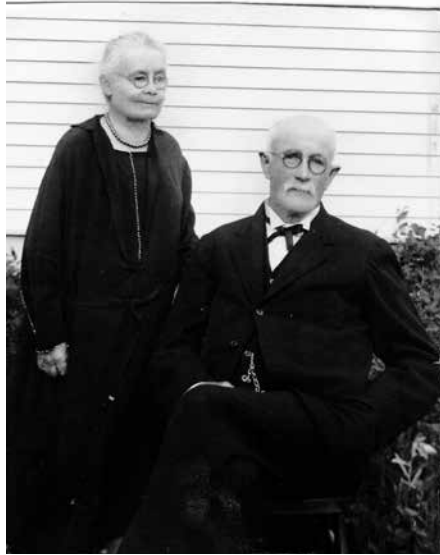
306 “Dropsy” is an archaic term for the swelling of soft tissues around the heart due to excess water accumulation.

Today, we would say that he had edema due to congestive heart failure. For more: <https://www.medicinenet.com/dropsy/definition.htm>.

307 Diary. Alice Cairns. August 28-29, 1933.

308 Diary. Alice Cairns. October 31, 1933.

309 Diary. Alice Cairns. November 9, 1933.



Alice & J.A. have fifty-one rich years of triumph and tragedy together. J.A. dies on October 29, 1933, and Alice follows barely six months later on April 12, 1934. Summer 1932.

A final holiday

The winter months are difficult for Alice, and her family gathers around her in a protective cocoon. After a lifetime of caring for everyone else, she is now cared for. Her granddaughters take turns staying with her and doing chores. In the evenings, the hired men come up to Alice's to smoke. The hired men live with Bob and Elsie, and Elsie doesn't allow smoking at her house, so the menfolk go up to Alice's, but maybe it is also a way they can keep her company.

In preparation for Christmas, hired men Leslie and Ronald and granddaughter Sadie put up bells and ornaments around Alice's living room in the evening of December 21. A "big mail parcel" arrives from daughter Amy. The next night a heavy snow falls, and the temperature plummets from 0° Fahrenheit to -26°. By Christmas Eve, it is a frigid -36°, but Leslie and Ronald still come to "smoke their Xmas cigars" and Bob and Elsie who have been out in the cutter arrive for a visit.³¹⁰

On Christmas Day, Harold brings the Dickey girls and Alice to Bob and Elsie's for the holiday meal. There are two turkeys for the twelve guests, who are

310 Since Bob and Elsie live next door to Alice, it is assumed from Alice's diary notes that they must have been out for other reasons in the cutter on Christmas Eve Day and coming home for the visit to Alice.



Bob & Elsie in the cutter. Undated.

Geoff, Susan, Amaret, Brian, Janet Jr., Sadie, Amy, Bob, Elsie, Leslie, Harold, and Alice. One turkey and some potatoes are prepared earlier in the day by Sadie at Alice's house. Leslie also brings a "pot of potatoes." There are "lots of presents," and Alice writes of this evening, "Good dinner, pleasant time."³¹¹

Though Alice had occasionally remarked over the years about how much work she had to do when all the children were growing up and the hired hands were also living in the house, she appears to thrive amidst the energy and the company of all those people in her home. She must have felt quite lonely in those months grieving the passing of her life-long companion.

Alice survives through the winter, but it is her last. On April 12, 1934, Alice Cairns dies, ending another generation while a new one is rising—a reminder that we are all just here for a short time. Alice's obituary describes her, summarizing the life of a beloved matron of a large family and community network, and emphasizing how debilitating to her were the deaths of her son Tom and her husband:

"Mrs. Cairns, though seriously ill for only a few days, had been obviously failing for some weeks. The death of her husband some few months before was a severe blow from which she did not recover.

"Gentle and unassuming in manner, possessing a bright and original mind, devoted to her home and family but always interested in and ready to help anyone outside that circle, Mrs. Cairns made and held a host of friends.

"One other great sorrow clouded her life and that of her husband—the death of their son Tom, who was killed in the World War...

311 Diary. Alice Cairns. December 21-25, 1933.

“...Many friends will be saddened at the thought of her passing and much sympathy will be felt for the bereaved family.”³¹²

Eight months later another significant family passing occurs, this one across the Atlantic, and marks another break in the family’s link to seafaring.

Captain Frank: the gift of friendship

On January 11, 1935, Geoff and Brian’s father, Captain Frank Hewson, has a sudden and unexpected heart attack at home and dies at age sixty-nine. It is a great shock to wife Amy and to son Brian, who happens to be visiting his parents in England at the time. Amy writes to Geoff and Susan with the awful news:

“This is a very sad letter to have to write you. I know, dear Geoff, how much you will sorrow to lose our dear dear Daddy so kind & good as he has always been to each & all of us. It has been a great comfort to have Brian home. & how little we thought would happen before he returned to Canada! It has been a very great shock to us all. Brian plans to come by a boat later than the one he originally intended.”

“...Norman [Turvey] came on Friday & is staying until after the funeral tomorrow—he has helped me greatly with the papers...It has been a very sad birthday for poor Barbara today.”³¹³

It’s clear that Frank’s death is quite sudden:

“We quite thought Daddy better & he appeared quite all right the day of his death. He said the night before that we would go & see Auntie Nellie this year & perhaps next year would come to see you. The Dr. said it was heart failure & instant death just like Uncle Tom.”³¹⁴

She also describes the outpouring of support from friends and family: “We have already had so many letters of sorrow & sympathy for Daddy was so greatly beloved. He had the gift of friendship.”³¹⁵

More specific information comes from Brian, who writes on the actual day:

312 Obituary. Mrs. (Rev.) J.A. Cairns. *Pictou Advocate*. May 3, 1934.

313 Letter. Amy (Waters) Hewson to son and daughter-in-law Geoffrey & Susan Hewson. January 13, 1935.

314 This “Uncle Tom” refers to Amy’s brother Tom Waters, son of Ben & Barbara Waters.

315 Letter. Amy (Waters) Hewson to son and daughter-in-law Geoffrey & Susan Hewson. January 13, 1935.



A portrait of Captain Frank Hewson. Undated.

“This morning I went to Hoylake to the doctor about my eyes & met Mother in Hoylake who was going to change a book, so we both came back together. When we got to the end of the road the bread boy said he could not get an answer & saw Daddy lying down in the kitchen, so I rushed in, but he was dead. I called the doctor, he said it was the heart that failed...he really dropped dead.

“We had only been gone 1½ hours & in that time, he had washed up the breakfast dishes, washed potatoes, and had just filled his tobacco jar when the attack came, as the tobacco jar did not have the screw top on.

“Mother was very sorry not to be in but she could not have done any good...she keeps saying she does not know what she will do, so I am going to ask her to come to Canada if she would like to...it may mean that I cannot sail Feb. 9th, but I will let you know later. The way Mother is she could not be left alone but of course she may join Aunties, but it is too early to say.

“...he...died about ½ past ten this morning...really it is better to of happened while I am here & better than a lingering death...it is no use to worry, he was quite happy to the last.”³¹⁶

316 Letter. Brian Hewson to Geoffrey & Susan Hewson. January 11, 1935.

Their sister Barbara enters a quick note in her handwriting as well: “Brian has been wonderful. Don’t know what Mother would have done without him. It’s an awful shock especially for Mother & Bri.”

Of course, each makes the last comment about the others.

In a subsequent letter, Brian describes a touching moment of the generosity of strangers:

“I got some men who were painting the corner house & Geoffrey [Haigh, a friend] to help to carry Daddy into the back room. The next day I went to thank them & offered them 1/ each.³¹⁷ They would not take it & said they were only too sorry for it to of happened, which I thought was very good of them as I did not know them, & they were just the working class.”³¹⁸

The funeral for Captain Frank Hewson is held in Hoylake Cemetery on January 14, 1935. Brian expects it to be “a very big one”:

“The P.S.N.C. [Pacific Steam Navigation Company] which he left 20 years ago have sent a message by Mr. Davis, of how sorry all the members of the company are. Also, the dock board two head men are coming & several others. They say that the L’pool paper is sure to send a reporter for an account of the funeral of such a well-known & liked person, so I will send it on to you.”³¹⁹

One obituary describes Frank as “a man of sterling qualities.” Three days after his death, the minister of his church, St. John’s at Meols, forwards the sad news to the congregants at the Sunday service:

“I would like this morning to refer to the passing of one who was a most devoted member of this congregation. Frank Hewson passed into the higher life very suddenly and unexpectedly on Friday morning. Those of us who knew him will always remember his kindly, cheerful personality. Our very deep sympathy will go out to the widow and family in the sudden and crushing sorrow that has fallen on their home.”³²⁰

Captain Frank had been an important figure to others in the family, such as nephew Norman Turvey, whose own father had died when Norman was

317 Another way of writing £1.

318 Letter. Brian Hewson to Geoffrey & Susan Hewson. January 13, 1935.

319 *ibid.*

320 *Passing of Capt. F. Hewson*. Obituary. Unnamed/undated newspaper.



Norman seated with his uncle and aunt, Frank & Amy Hewson. Undated.



Captain Frank Hewson at a family wedding, most likely that of Jack or Norman Turvey. Undated.

a baby. Norman sends a letter of condolence to Geoff, expressing his sadness, explaining that Frank had been a father figure to him, and what a shock it was to lose what feels to him like the first of his parents' generation, him having been a toddler when he lost his own father:

“Dear Geoff, I am sure you will have been very very sad when the news of Uncle’s passing on reached you. For us it is quite the biggest loss to the family in my experience & we grieve I think almost as much as you will as we were very deeply attached to him. We are so thankful Brian was at home & also that if it had to be, he went without pain and suffering. He leaves a tremendous gap.”³²¹

Many people have come to visit and to help the Hewson family in their time of grief. One amusing account amidst the sorrow regards a cousin of

321 Letter. Norman Turvey to Geoff Hewson. January 27, 1935. P. 1.

Geoff, Brian, and Barbara's—Dorothy Stokes, who a week after the funeral is still staying with the Hewsons and has worn out her welcome: "Dorothy is still staying. She is a very peculiar person. She sleeps at Aunties. We have been hoping all week she would go but so far has said nothing about leaving."³²²

Amy ultimately decides to remain in her home, not wanting to live with the Aunties, but not wanting to leave either, both because the Aunties had moved to Meols to be near her, and because she wanted Brian to have a home of his own one day.³²³ So Brian returns to Canada on February 23, 1935, on *Antonia*. The practical Hewson nature is evident when Brian remarks on what he will bring with him on the voyage:

"I will have a good deal to bring out as Daddy had a lot of clothing. I expect about 20 pairs of socks, 20 shirts, etc. He has 5 overcoats but I think I will only bring two & leave the others in a drawer so that we could use them any time we come to England."³²⁴

A timely inheritance

In 1935, Geoff and Susan begin to build a new home,³²⁵ today known as the Farmhouse, on Section 16-13-2-W2—land that Geoff had purchased in 1931. Later that year, Geoff and Susan welcome their second child, Barbara Janet, on April 9, 1935. Now with two children and their plans for a large family, the new house is even more important, but times are difficult, and money is tight.

The recent passing of Geoff's father, Captain Frank Hewson, has allowed for his mother Amy in England to help Geoff and Susan build their home sooner than may have otherwise been possible. Eight months after his father's death, Geoff had received this surprise from his mother:

"Dear Geoffrey. Yesterday I went to the bank & transferred to your account £600 in dollars (4.98 to the £, I think) so it will be at your Bank of Toronto Kennedy as soon as you receive this or possibly a day or two earlier. You need not feel at all worried about taking it. I have not had to alter any investments. It comes from dear Daddy's insurance & was only

322 Letter. Brian Hewson to Geoffrey & Susan Hewson. January 20, 1935.

323 *ibid.*

324 *ibid.*

325 *Hewson Family History. Langbank Memories*. 1984. P. 327.



The new Hewson "Farmhouse" built in 1935. In front of the house are the girls, Amaret & Barbara with dolls, mother Susan & dog Toby. 1937.

lying at the bank. I am glad for it to be used & to be saving you money just now where you need it so much. I would like you all to have a comfortable home & each a good-sized bedroom, not cramped, & not to have to turn out or share with room for proper furniture...With ready money you will probably get better terms & value & not be tied down in any way. Dear Geoff, you can feel quite comfortable & you will have much pleasure in planning your new home & Susan too."³²⁶

The Hewson's new house is a mail order home, possibly an Aladdin home.³²⁷ The house has five bedrooms, but after four children Geoff and Susan will eventually run out of space for everyone to have a "good-sized bedroom."³²⁸

326 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoffrey & Susan Hewson. August 20, 1935.

327 The Aladdin Company of Bay City, Michigan was one of America's most long-lived manufacturers of mail-order, "kit homes." Begun in 1906 by two brothers, Otto and William Sovereign, the family-owned firm continued to manufacture houses until 1981. Found 9/3/21 at https://www.cmich.edu/library/clarke/ResearchResources/Michigan_Material_Local/Bay_City_Aladdin_Co/Pages/default.aspx.

328 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoffrey & Susan Hewson. August 20, 1935.

Brian returns to England

Geoff and Brian Hewson are more than brothers, they are also best friends. After Geoff had returned from England in 1922 with Brian, they had a decade of fun and work together, eventually partnering in farming their own land, sharing good and hard times. Before Geoff and Susan are married, the brothers are seen more often together than apart. After Geoff's marriage, not much changes. However, by the mid 1930s Brian is showing signs of mental illness. In August 1935, Amy Dickey writes in her diary, "Brian had a nervous breakdown, fainted and wandered mentally, physically, etc."³²⁹

Though it's not clear when Brian's illness begins, we do know he faces the loss of two father figures in close succession: The Reverend Cairns' death in 1933, and then the unexpected sudden death of his own father, Frank, while Brian was visiting his parents in England in 1935.

After returning to Canada from this traumatic trip, Brian spends some time being treated in Regina and the Weyburn mental hospital. On September 1, Cousin Elmer Cowan, Geoff, and Bob take Brian to Regina, and he returns home on November 16. On February 3, 1936, he is sick again and Geoff takes him again to Regina on February 6.

In the spring, Amy Hewson, now a seventy-year-old widow, makes the difficult solitary journey from England to Saskatchewan. Though she is glad to meet her grandchildren, she is concerned about her son, Brian.

In May, the Hewsons, accompanied by Amy, go to the Weyburn mental hospital to visit Brian, where he has apparently been referred. He is still there on June 23 when the Hewsons go for a second visit.³³⁰

His condition deteriorates and he becomes too difficult for Geoff and Susan to handle with their young family, and in the fall of 1936, almost two years after the death of their father, Geoff escorts his brother back to England where he enters the first of two treatment facilities. The trip to England starts by rail, ends by ship, and is documented by Geoff in letters home to Susan from September 20 to October 18, when he returns to Canada. The letters indicate that, while Brian is reluctant to go to the hospital, he is relatively restrained on the trip, and not too difficult for Geoff to handle. Here are some excerpts

³²⁹ Diary. Amy Dickey. August 31, 1935.

³³⁰ Diary. Amy Dickey. September 1, 1935; November 16, 1935; February 3, 1936; February 6, 1936; May 13, 1936, and June 23, 1936.



Grannie Amy Hewson visits Saskatchewan in 1936 to see her hospitalized son, Brian. Here she is shown with her other son Geoff & his daughters Barbara & Amaret & dog Toby at the as-yet unpainted new house. Spring 1936.

that tell the story, first from the train leg of the journey from Saskatchewan to Montreal, which he writes on CPR letterhead:

“So far so good. No bother at all. We passed through Langbank without any excitement. B thought he would like to get out & see if anybody was round but I said it wasn’t worth it. I had told the conductor about him & he kept his eye on him...”³³¹

“Brian has no suicidal tendencies now & he slept well on the train last night as did I...”³³²

“Brian isn’t any bother except he keeps talking to himself or as he calls it—talking through... If I cable you ‘arrived’ it means O.K. no bother & if he is unruly I will say ‘grasshopper,’ but I don’t anticipate trouble...A man just gave us a cigar each. I didn’t have time to say we didn’t smoke because he offered it B. first & he took it so I followed suit...PS—Brian was writing most of yesterday composing a letter to Janet. I got him to send it to you & you can burn it.”³³³

331 Letter. Geoff Hewson to wife Susan Hewson. September 20, 1936. P.1.

332 *ibid.* P.3.

333 Letter. Geoff Hewson to wife Susan Hewson. October 1-2, 1936. P.1.

On October 2, Geoff and Brian board *T.S.S. Letitia* of the Donaldson Atlantic Line, headed for London. They miss breakfast, but eat a hearty lunch on their first day aboard:

“I had soup first, then fish then sausage & mashed potatoes. Then cold sausage & mashed potatoes. Then rice pudding with plums but minus the rice. Then watermelon and tea. Also a few soda biscuits and rolls.”³³⁴... Brian is quite quiet and eats well.”³³⁵

In this letter we first learn where Geoff will ultimately be delivering Brian... the institution has the recommendation of Brian’s doctor from the Weyburn hospital: “Dr. Bird said York retreat was a well-known place.”³³⁶

During the week’s sail, Geoff writes to Susan of the shipboard activities, the meals and entertainment. He describes “bum women” who “drink and smoke.” Geoff is not happy on the voyage, being “sick of doing nothing.” “I am not enjoying this trip at all,” he writes. “I feel it was not necessary for me to come.” One positive factor, though, is that Brian is behaving: “B. is no trouble at all & I don’t have to look after him. He gained 6 lbs. in a week; he can eat twice as much as me.” As they near England, Geoff says, “I think that B. will come home to Mother’s for the weekend & then go to York next Monday. He is under the impression that all he needs is an examination but he should stay there under observation for some time & no doubt will.”³³⁷

Geoff and Brian arrive on Sunday, October 10, and Amy writes to her daughter-in-law to assure her:

“You would be very relieved to hear of Geoff’s safe arrival & that he had no trouble. We all thought Brian looking very ill when he arrived, but he has been quite sensible & quiet. He gained weight steadily—but to my mind is not yet as heavy as he should be for his build. Geoff & he went yesterday to York by train & B. entered the Hospital voluntarily—he is to go to bed for 2 weeks & have a thorough examination. They have a lady doctor as well as 2 men doctors resident & also visiting doctors. Geoff will now have a few days rest & free from worry I hope...”³³⁸

334 *ibid.*

335 *ibid.* P. 3.

336 *ibid.* Pg. 4.

337 Letter. Geoff Hewson to wife Susan Hewson. October 7, 1936. P.3-8.

338 Letter. Amaret Hewson to daughter-in-law Susan Hewson. October 10, 1936. P.1.

While in England, Geoff does some sight-seeing with his sister's husband, Harold Mills. Geoff is quite taken with his new brother-in-law. He writes to Susan, "I like Harold very much he is quite easy going & good to get along with."³³⁹ They take a scenic trip through Birkenhead and North Wales, which is full of meaning for Geoff: "We were out about 3 hours & drove about 90 miles," he writes. "We saw the house where I was born & where we lived before moving here."

Geoff is also happy to see his sister Barbara, who is getting fitted for false teeth:

"Barbara got a set of false teeth for \$25 & then couldn't wear them they were uncomfortable they had gold plate so she got another set which are quite comfortable & cost about ¼ the price."³⁴⁰

Bar and Geoff are clearly close siblings and Geoff spends quite a bit of time with her. He shares the most intimate of confidences with his sister: He writes to Susan, "I get up & see Barbara quite a bit. I was telling her [Barbara] yesterday how I enjoyed watching you take a bath."³⁴¹



Geoff spends time visiting his sister Barbara. Fall 1936.

339 Letter. Geoff Hewson to wife Susan Hewson. October 11, 1936. P.4.

340 *ibid.* P.1-3.

341 Letter. Geoff Hewson to wife Susan Hewson. October 14, 1936. P.2.

Geoff plans to take Brian the next day or two to see Dr. Brown at the York Retreat, where he hopes the doctor can persuade Brian to remain voluntarily, “as it means much less red tape.”³⁴² But, three days later they have still not made the trip:

“Brian and I expect to go to York on Saturday. He is none too keen on going, but I think he will alright; I took him to a picture show last night and it featured a trip by air from NY to Frisco.”³⁴³

Finally, Geoff gets Brian to York on Sunday, October 18. He writes to Susan: “Well I delivered the good yesterday & B is at York. It took 3 hours in the train.”³⁴⁴ Geoff and Brian are met in York by Cousin Norman Turvey, who helps Geoff in his bid to convince Brian to stay at the Retreat:

“Norman met us at York & I saw York cathedral but wasn’t in. We also saw R. Pynes’ old church aft the retreat most of the staff was away (Sat aft) but there was a lady doctor on duty at first I didn’t know if male or female she had boyish bob about 25 years old or less very nice to talk to. B. had to go to bed for 2 weeks first. We had a long talk with him before we left. Nor & I. Norman put forth some very good arguments...”³⁴⁵

Geoff does some sightseeing, visiting relatives and friends such as the Turveys and the Coxes, but he is anxious to get back home to his wife. Of Norman and Jeanne, he says, “they are as in love as you and I are.”³⁴⁶ In every letter there is evidence of how much he is missing Susan:

“I think of you often in the day and always at night before I go to sleep... it seems quite true that absence makes the heart grow fonder... Barbara says she doesn’t know how you managed in the trying times. I have to explain to her it’s because you have me for a husband... I can hardly wait till I get to L’bank to see you. We can go to the pictures & have quite a spoon.”³⁴⁷

In fact, Geoff comes up with a plan to see Susan even before he can get home to Langbank. Though we don’t know if it transpired or not, it shows how much Geoff missed being away from his wife:

342 *ibid.* P.1.

343 *ibid.* P.1-3.

344 Letter. Geoff Hewson to wife Susan Hewson. October 18, 1936. P.1.

345 *ibid.*

346 *ibid.* P.4.

347 Letter. Geoff Hewson to wife Susan Hewson. October 14, 1936. P.1-3.

“Well my dear I have had a brainwave...If convenient you can come and meet me in W’peg. We could have the day there. I believe my train gets in about 9 A.M. & yours at 8:20 A.M. & I am going to give you a big long kiss as soon as we meet because I love you so much. It seems quite true that absence makes the heart grow fonder. I want you to get a single ticket to W’peg & you can go back on Brian’s return half...I think that perhaps you might pick out yourself a new coat when in Winnipeg & if funds will permit you certainly will have it.”³⁴⁸

Geoff departs on the long journey back to Canada, undoubtedly with a mixture of feelings: sadness about leaving Brian behind; relief that his brother will be getting professional help and that he and Susan will no longer bear all the responsibility for Brian’s well-being; and joy that he will soon be back with his wife and family.

The family is just beginning a long journey with Brian, and the two brothers who have been so close will now to be permanently separated, except through letters.

A ray of sunshine

Happier times are around the corner back in Saskatchewan. With a home secured, Harold can now ask his sweetheart, Sadie Dickey, for her hand in marriage. Happily for Harold, Sadie accepts.

John and Janet Dickey host their daughter’s wedding in their home on May 26, 1938, at 3:00 p.m. Marching to the strains of the *Bridal Chorus*, played by her older sister Janet, Sarah Anabel joins her groom Harold Cox underneath an arch of blossoming branches. Preacher J. Brooks of Kennedy conducts the nuptials in the presence of about twenty-five relatives of the bridal pair.³⁴⁹

Sadie wears “conventional white,” with a coronet of natural blossoms, and Harold’s gift to her: a set of amethyst earrings, pendant and chain. There is a “delightful lunch” following picture-taking outside, and the couple leave in a car to honeymoon in Lloydminster. It is a beautiful and meaningful day now linking an additional family name—the Coxes—into the Waters line.

³⁴⁸ *ibid.*

³⁴⁹ Wedding Announcement. *Cox-Dickey, Spectator*. June 1938.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The necklace that Harold gave Sadie for her wedding present.

The happy bride and groom.

Wedding attendees. Back row, L to R: Isabel Sharp, Esmond Sharp behind Bob Cairns, Florence Sharp, Elsie Cairns, Willie & Amelia Wickham (John Dickey's sister); Charlotte Wickham and Della Duke in front of Amy Dickey & Lou Cowan (John Dickey's niece). Elmer Cowan & Geoff on far right. Middle row, seated L to R: John Dickey, Harold & Sadie Cox, Janet Sr., Mrs. Brooks. Front row, L to R: Elizabeth Dickey, Amaret Hewson & Susan Hewson holding Barbara.



But dark events are building in the world that will soon overshadow these happy family occasions...on both sides of the ocean.

A year and a half after Harold and Sadie's wedding, on September 1, 1939, the unthinkable happens again. The "War to End All Wars," as it turns out, would not be able to keep that nickname. Germany's Chancellor Adolf Hitler invades Poland, triggering the start of another global conflict. Two days later France and Britain declare war on Germany, beginning World War II.³⁵⁰ It would last for six bloody years and involve every continent on the globe except Antarctica.³⁵¹

It will have a profound effect on the families on both sides of the Atlantic, but the actual fighting feels nearer to the British relations. Right at home, in fact.

350 *World War II. History.com.* Found 9/5/21 at <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/world-war-ii-history>.

351 *World War II. U-S-history.com.* Found 9/5/21 at <https://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1661.html>.

Chapter 21

The British Hewsons and World War II

THE WAR OVERSHADOWS almost all Amy (Waters) Hewson's letters to Canada from 1939-41, most of them written from her home at #3 Centurion Drive in Meols, Cheshire. Her sisters, the "Aunties" May Waters and Edith (Waters) Turvey, live down the road at #15 Centurion Drive.

Amy is another of the family's devoted letter writers. Her letters, and those of other family members, illustrate the strength and closeness of the Waters family and its descendants, especially during wartime.

Though Geoff is living in Canada and Brian is hospitalized, Amy's daughter Barbara is close, living in nearby Ackworth. In June 1935, just a few months after her father Captain Frank Hewson's death, Barbara had married Harold Mills, a genial banker. The Captain's absence no doubt created a sadness along with the happiness of the nuptials.

In the next few years, Barbara and Harold will have two children—Geoffrey (b. 1936) and Elizabeth (b. 1939).



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The Hewson home at #3 Centurion Drive in Meols, England.

An earlier portrait of Amaret "Amy" (Waters) Hewson. By the time World War II broke out, she had already lived more than seventy years and lost her husband. Undated.

A picture taken from the "Aunties" home at #15 Centurion. It shows a milk delivery being made, and the market gardens across the street. July 13-14, 1930.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Mr. & Mrs. Harold and Barbara Mills, just after their garden nuptials at #3 Centurion Drive.

L to R: Edith Turvey, Barbara (Hewson) Mills, Amy Hewson, Dorothy Stokes & May Waters. June 1935.

Barbara with baby Elizabeth, Geoffrey & Grannie Hewson. 1939.

Barbara with first child Geoffrey. 1936.



Better safe than sorry

Everyone is being asked to prepare for war, though no one knows for sure if it will happen. Amy seems to think it will not: “I do think Hitler will be very reluctant to have war—he has built many fine buildings & roads & will not want to have these bombed—also I am sure they need money very badly—their breed is poor & they badly need butter & fats.”³⁵²

Regardless, Amy makes all the preparations, like getting fitted for her gas mask:

“This morning after church I went to the Meols School to have a gas mask fitted on. It is the day for this district. Each mask is given in a small cardboard box. It did not take more than a minute or two to fit it. Children over 4 also have them, under 4 at present there is no protection but I think something is being devised. We hope these will not be needed.”³⁵³

By April, children as young as little Geoffrey Mills also have their gas masks, and Harold is thinking about whether to put a bomb-proof shelter in his garden.³⁵⁴

War correspondent

Before, and even during, the war, the letters and parcels are continuous between mother and son. In February, Amy is sending her granddaughter Barbara a popular book just published two years previously³⁵⁵: “Thank you for letting me know what Barbara would like for her birthday. I have got Jemima Puddleduck for her.”³⁵⁶

Throughout the war, Amy reports on the war news to her son and their family. Sometimes she voices strong opinions, a trait found in her children as well. She often praises the bravery of the Royal Armed Forces, British and Canadian: “There have been great air raids...but it has not been a successful attempt for the enemy—our airman—both British & Dominion are truly wonderful.”³⁵⁷

352 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. February 12, 1939. P. 1.

353 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. November 13, 1938. P. 2.

354 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. April 23, 1938. P. 1.

355 An illustrated children's book by Beatrix Potter, published in 1908. It was considered by critics to be her best, though her most famous would be the Peter Rabbit stories. For more: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Tale_of_Jemima_Puddle-Duck.

356 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. February 26, 1938. P. 3.

357 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. August 16, 1940. P. 5.

As early reports come through in 1938 of the treatment of Jews in Germany, a foreshadowing of terrible atrocities to come, Amy tells Geoff, “I should think you could do with some of the German Jew doctors, they are said to be very clever. We have allowed a certain number to come to England.”³⁵⁸ Near the end of the year, she writes:

“Everyone is very sorry for the treatment of the Jews—the Germans must be very badly off to have to confiscate their money & property. They (German rulers) don’t show much sense or they would not get the world against them when they are wanting their colonies back again. I am sure the German people are not like that—it is just the cruel spirit in the leaders.”³⁵⁹

On Good Friday in April 1939, Amy takes a day trip with the Mills family to a small mountain village in Wales called Cilcen that would later become a significant retreat from the war:

“It was beautiful there among the mountains & with the mountain air so invigorating—we had a walk on the moors & then came back to a cottage where was had a delicious tea—fresh eggs, homemade bread, currant teacakes & sandwich, cake, all homemade.”³⁶⁰

Even as Amy describes this lovely, serene day, she also comments, “the war clouds are getting blacker.”³⁶¹ On Easter Sunday, Amy goes to visit her husband’s grave, writing, “Daddy’s grave looks so nice with daffodils all in flower on it—the church yard all gay with flowers on practically every grave.”³⁶²

By July, Amy thinks war is closer, but remains optimistic, in her own bold way: “It looks like we are on the brink of war again, but one never knows. The masses don’t want war—only the asses!”³⁶³

With the knowledge possessed by a widow of a merchant marine captain, Amy’s opinion is that duties to be paid on imported goods among trading nations contribute to the inexorable march toward war: “I wish that duties could be done away with. I think they are responsible for much of the unrest

358 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. February 26, 1938. P. 3.

359 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. November 20, 1938. P. 2-3.

360 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. April 8, 1939. P. 1.

361 *ibid.* P. 2.

362 *ibid.* P. 3-4.

363 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. July 2, 1939. P. 1. Amy’s grandson Thomas Hewson would later echo her comments, as a pro-trade voice in the Canadian agricultural policy world from the 1990s through the 2010s.

& ill feeling between nations & certainly our merchant shipping has suffered thro' it."³⁶⁴

Regardless of the pending troubles, Amy finds comforts, like her garden:

“My garden is lovely just now, lovely white tall lilies, delphiniums, pinks, lupins, giant sea pinks, poppies, roses of all colors. I cannot get gypsophila to grow, but have had some fine ones given me & sweet peas.”³⁶⁵

And there is also royal watching to engage in. The King and Queen have returned from their historic five-day trip to the United States, where the King and U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt had created bonds that would later allow the U.S. to come to the United Kingdom's defense.³⁶⁶ They return in mid-June 1939, and Amy records the response from the British people:

“The King & Queen got a great welcome home at the Mansion House. When the King mentioned the Queen, the clapping & enthusiasm was so great that the queen had tears in her eyes.”³⁶⁷

The war begins

All remaining hopes for peace are dashed when Germany invades Poland on September 1, 1939, and World War II begins. Amy writes:

“The Germans do seem to have the knack of setting nations against them—they are so untruthful. They have always made their army their god. It is to be hoped they won't after this, but it is tragic to think of the lives wasted and homes wrecked by their wicked greed. All nations should combine against them.”³⁶⁸

“...I hope soon all the mines will be destroyed. Germany certainly seems to be in an awkward position between Russia whom she does not want for a neighbour, & the combined French & British armies & navies & aeroplanes.”³⁶⁹

364 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. April 23, 1939. P. 1.

365 *ibid.*

366 *The British Royal Visit*. Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum website. Found 9/20/21 at <https://www.fdrlibrary.org/royal-visit>.

367 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. July 2, 1939. P. 1.

368 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. April 14, 1940. P. 2.

369 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. December 14, 1939. P.4.

Still, she has compassion for enemy soldiers who perish: “The war is getting fiercer—one cannot but be sorry for the lives lost—they say 1000 Germans were washed ashore and tho’ they are enemies one cannot but be sorry tho’ the fault was theirs.”³⁷⁰

Defensive measures in England now begin in earnest. Airplanes overhead at night are constantly keeping watch, along with search lights. It seems now inevitable that the war will soon reach England:

“The war is getting nearer & now we have to carry gas masks about with us again. We cannot but wonder at the German leaders who have the knack of getting all nations against them...The Prussians were always brutal. They have excelled themselves this time. It is the general opinion that they cannot win this war tho’ they can do much harm.

“We hear news on the wireless very frequently & you will probably hear more than we do as of course it is important not to tell the enemy anything.”³⁷¹

Blackout cloth is put over all windows, in every kind of building, so light cannot escape and assist the enemy in the anticipated nighttime bombing raids. Curfews are imposed. Children wear out gas masks carrying them to and from school.³⁷² And air raid drills are practiced in Meols:

“We are to have an air raid warning tomorrow to get people used to the signals. They had one recently...where people ran to the shelter found they could not get in, as no one had the key to the locked door!!”³⁷³

Refugees are pouring into England from war-torn parts of Europe, such as young Rudolph, who has been “adopted” by a bachelor vicar who is paying for his schooling:

“..Jack, Margaret, Ralph & an Austrian boy³⁷⁴ came for the day yesterday. The boy’s father & mother & little sister are now in England—about 5 miles from Jack’s at a large mental home where the mother works as a maid & the father has an appointment. They are allowed to have the children with them in the holidays—the father is a professor & the mother highly

370 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. April 28, 1940. P. 4.

371 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. May 12, 1940.

372 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff and Susan Hewson. December 14, 1939. P.3-4.

373 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff and Susan Hewson. January 12, 1940. P.4.

374 Rudolph.

educated but they are glad to be safe from concentration camps or worse. The Russians have always been bullies, the Saxons are better. The Finns are fighting very bravely.”³⁷⁵

Foreign nationals are being interned; everyone is suspected of being a spy:

“...the women aliens & their children are being sent to Port Erin in the IOM³⁷⁶ where all the hotels & apartment houses are filled with them—the little seaside place is wired in, but they can enjoy the sand & lovely views & wander about in the encampment—these are supposed to be friendly aliens but there has been so much spying & treachery that everyone has to be suspect—the men are in a different encampment. Sir Oswald Mosley³⁷⁷ & his friends are also interned; they are Fascists & about time they were interned.”³⁷⁸

Their whole world is changing:

“All sorts of precautions are being taken. No names of towns or villages are allowed to be shown & road names are all obliterated or taken down. Even the buses have no names of places on them, as they say they can be seen from aeroplanes with field glasses.

“So far the rations have not been altered & we have plenty of everything—tho’ it must be hard for the poor—those who only just managed before...

“They say the English lose every battle but the last one! Anyway it’s a long road that has no turning: & now we are more self-contained & under one leadership it should be easier.”³⁷⁹

The mail has become slow and spotty, and not just because of mail ships being destroyed by torpedoes. In February 1940, she talks about the IRA³⁸⁰ and the impact on mail delivery of its London post office bombings, making things even more dangerous:

375 *ibid.* P. 2.

376 The Isle of Man.

377 Mosley was a British Member of Parliament who became disillusioned with mainstream politics and in the 1930s became leader of the British Union of Fascists. He was imprisoned in May 1940, and the BUF was banned. He was released in 1943 and moved abroad. For more: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oswald_Mosley.

378 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. June 2, 1940.

379 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. June 23, 1940. P. 3-4.

380 The Irish Republican Army (IRA) is a name used by various paramilitary organizations in Ireland throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, dedicated to the belief that all of Ireland should be an independent republic free from British rule. For more: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_Republican_Army.

“One at least of your letters is missing as it is over a fortnight since your previous letter came—it may have been lost at sea or destroyed by the I.R.A. when the bomb injured so much mail at the P.O. Some of the letters were L’pool ones. The IRA is such a silly organization—they always work in an underhand way doing harm to innocent people. Hitler should have them to deal with—they are birds of a feather.”³⁸¹

Mail is also delayed by inspection processes that censor any sensitive information leaving the country. In April of the next year, Amy has a letter returned to her because “I had told you too much;”³⁸² other letters arrive indicating they have been opened and censored, with white tape applied across words deemed to be too informative.

A week later, she indicates there is a lot more to tell, but she can’t: “...hard times, but we are all well. I could a tale unfold but hush! Here comes the Bogey Man, the censor, so I refrain.”³⁸³

And there is disinformation happening across the “social media” of those days—radio:

“I wonder if you hear anything of Lord Haw Haw³⁸⁴ as he calls himself who broadcast in English from Germany and tries to frighten English folk—he is good at ‘fairy tales.’ Here he is regarded as a joke.”³⁸⁵

Amy staunchly defends the British position and shows her distaste for power that does not respect law and tradition:

“England did everything possible in the appeasement line & all Hitler’s promises have been broken time after time. It does not do to have dictators or kings with unlimited authority. A parliament of some kind is necessary to prevent these wars...

“...So many innocent nations have suffered under Hitler & Mussolini—our armies in the Soudan [sic] & with the Greeks are doing very well. I wonder what they will do with so many prisoners.”³⁸⁶

381 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. February 11, 1940. P. 2.

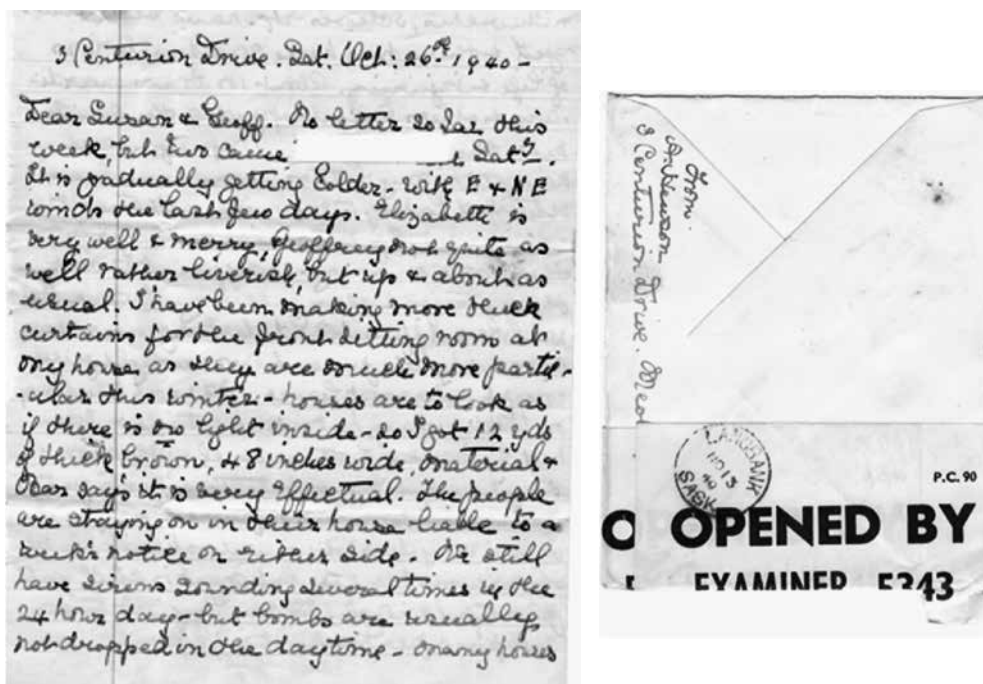
382 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. April 18, 1941.

383 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. April 22, 1941.

384 Lord Haw-Haw was a nickname applied to William Joyce, who broadcast Nazi propaganda to the UK from Germany during WWII. For more: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord_Haw-Haw.

385 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. February 17, 1940.

386 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. February 6, 1941.



A censored letter & envelope from 1940 returned to Amy Hewson.

The war is getting closer to home every day; now, a neighbour of Bar and Harold's has lost a husband:

“A neighbour of Bar's heard yesterday that her husband's ship was sunk—he is a wireless operator—she is afraid there is little hope of his being saved. So many good lives sacrificed for a few bad Germans.”³⁸⁷

Operation Dynamo

A major event of the war takes place from May 26 to June 4, 1940—during the Battle of France. Codenamed Operation Dynamo, it is a desperate and dangerous effort to evacuate nearly 350,000 trapped Allied soldiers, Belgian, British, and French troops, from the beaches and harbour of Dunkirk in northern France. While the campaign is called miraculous, 68,000 Allied soldiers lose their lives³⁸⁸:

387 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. February 21, 1941. P. 1.

388 Dunkirk evacuation. Found 8/1/21 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dunkirk_evacuation.

“Today there are special Thanksgiving services for the saving of so many of the troops from Flanders. We were all so anxious about them & it was a marvellous deed to save them—at Dunkirk the harbour was demolished so only vessels of small draught could approach the shores. Two of the IOM boats were lost among other small pleasure steamers. We are all being warned against parachutists who may try to land, & to keep cycles & motor cars locked up, or to leave them so they cannot be started.”³⁸⁹

After June and Dunkirk, the German bombings of England and France intensify. London schoolchildren are evacuated to Devon, Cornwall, and southern Wales³⁹⁰:

“Well, the war situation is very serious & seems each day to grow worse. We are all hoping that help will get to France—she has had so many enemies within—the Belgian King was responsible for much of the loss & now Italy has joined the enemies & the Germans don’t mind how many of their men they sacrifice, they have so many...”³⁹¹

Later, Amy happens on a soldier who had been at Dunkirk:

“...on our way there [to see Brian], we picked up a soldier who was asking for a lift—he had been at Dunkirk & had to wait two days on the beach there before getting on an old sort of fishing smack³⁹² whose engine had gone so they had to be towed by another ship all across the Channel.

They only just escaped & had orders to blow up their transport wagons & ammunition & a good thing they did as they would have been caught if they had gone by the road—they had a long walk—it rained all the way across Channel & they were on the open deck but the rain kept the German aeroplanes off so they were glad & they got a magnificent welcome when they at last landed.”³⁹³

389 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff and Susan Hewson. June 8, 1940. P. 4.

390 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff and Susan Hewson. June 16, 1940. P. 1.

391 *ibid.*

392 A smack was a traditional fishing boat used off the coast of Britain and the Atlantic coast of America for most of the nineteenth century and, in small numbers, up to the Second World War. For more: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smack_\(ship\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smack_(ship))

393 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. January 9, 1941. P. 7-8.

Chapter 22

Family Comes Together in Wartime

AMY HAS MANY ACTIVITIES to keep herself occupied on things other than war. She knits vests for her grandchildren Elizabeth and Geoffrey.³⁹⁴ She is reading *Eliza for Common* by O. Douglas and *The Citadel* by A.S. Cronin, two popular novels of the day.³⁹⁵ In the summer of 1940, she is growing practical vegetables that save on rationing coupons such as parsley, beans, lettuces both long and short, and peas. She fills her house with flower bouquets, which provide beauty amid fear and uncertainty:

“I have a lovely bowl of roses—red, pink & cream & they scent the room. Also, a vase of purple iris & a brown jug with huge scarlet poppies in it.”³⁹⁶

She also helps the war effort in any way she can: “A lady came round to collect walking sticks for soldiers in hospital as they can often get about with that help. I gave her the one Daddy used.”³⁹⁷ Authorities also collect aluminum, iron, brass, and copper from householders—even bones, rags, and paper. “It is wonderful how much they get weekly,” Amy writes.³⁹⁸

394 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. July 23, 1940. P. 4.

395 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. February 12, 1939. P. 4.

396 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. June 8, 1940. P. 2.

397 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. June 16, 1940. P. 4.

398 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. July 23, 1940. P. 6.

Son-in law Harold helps Amy cover all the windows of the house with blackout cloth, and extra measures are taken: “We are busy pasting strips of brown paper over the windows to prevent, we hope, their blowing out in case of an air raid in the vicinity.”³⁹⁹

With all the windows shielded from the sun, it’s dim inside even in the daytime. This has a depressing effect on Jeanne Turvey, Cousin Norman’s wife, as it must on so many who are forced to live in semi-darkness: “We had both our living rooms redecorated & new fireplaces put in. As everything is light in colour it’s a real boon in these days of black out. I just loathe living so shut in.”⁴⁰⁰

In February, Norman writes his cousin, Geoff, after a visit to Meols: “The three ladies at Meols are growing old. Auntie May in particular is beginning to look it & Mother also. Of the three, your mother looks the most active.”⁴⁰¹

Travel restrictions are in place that reduce the amount of family visiting that can take place:

“Norman has asked Aunties there & Mrs. Harry Turvey has also asked us there for a fortnight. Also Auntie N. has asked me to go there, but we are ‘staying put’; it is not a good time for travelling—trains are few & don’t connect as in peace time...

“...Good Friday is not to be a public holiday this year; there will only be Easter Monday & there will be no extra trains. People are asked not to travel unless quite necessary. The railways are wanted for freight trains.”⁴⁰²

And travel can also be distressing. The Aunties go to a meeting in Birkenhead, and report back the devastation they see there to Amy:

“So many houses big & small & shops down to the ground or much damaged. Very distressing to lose relations, houses & everything...countless windows frames & all are out. Holes are in many roofs & fronts of houses out. In most the staircases are left standing.”⁴⁰³

399 *ibid.* p. 2.

400 Letter. Jeanne Turvey to Geoff & Susan Hewson. January 2, 1940. P.3-4.

401 Letter. Norman Turvey to Geoff & Susan Hewson. February 1, 1940. P.3-4.

402 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. April 5, 1941. P.4.

403 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. April 5, 1941. P.3.

The Mills family moves into No. 3

On August 24, 1940, Amy's months of urging Barbara and Harold to move in with her come to fruition. Preparations to receive her guests take several days, as furniture from the sitting room is taken upstairs, a carpet is brought down, cupboards are removed from the wall.⁴⁰⁴ Amy reports a successful move:

“Bar, Harold & family moved in yesterday—they are all sleeping downstairs in the back sitting room & are not at all crowded. It is much better for now they have not to move the children downstairs when a warning sounds.”⁴⁰⁵

This time together will bring Amy even closer to her daughter, son-in-law, and her grandchildren. She will help Barbara with the children, and Harold will take on responsibility for his mother-in-law and her two sisters in addition to his own young family. Jack Turvey describes Harold's central role:

“Margaret and I hope to scurry up to Merseyside for the day on Friday with Ralph to see how they are all wearing these difficult days. It is very nice to have Harold there, who seems to understand their needs and is a great stay and support to them.”⁴⁰⁶

In fact, the grandchildren are a wonderful distraction for Amy, which she clearly enjoys. Geoffrey is four years old, and Elizabeth is twenty months old:

“Geoffrey is well & gaining weight again, Elizabeth is well, but her teeth still seem to bother her at times—she is very active & keeps pulling herself up & standing. She loves Geoffrey & calls him Jeffy. She is much improved in looks & many strangers say “Oh! What a pretty baby...She is animated & smiling & takes an interest in all she sees.”⁴⁰⁷

“The event of the week is that Elizabeth has walked alone—she is very proud of her new accomplishment. She is a funny little girl. She likes to sit on a footstool under the table & to turn things out of boxes or drawers & then to carefully put them back again.”⁴⁰⁸

404 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. August 16, 1940. P.4.

405 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. August 25, 1940. P. 2.

406 Letter. Jack Turvey to Geoff & Susan Hewson. January 6, 1940. P. 1-2.

407 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. August 16, 1940. P. 5.

408 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. December 20, 1940. P. 1-2.

At Christmas, they receive care packages from family and friends in Canada, including the man who lost a hand from the same shell that killed Alice and J.A. Cairns' son Tom in the previous war:

“Bar received a parcel that Frank Clarke kindly sent with 4 lbs sugar, 1 lb tea, a cake & some chocolate—very kind of him to send it. He sent it by ship (not post) so there was 4/- duty to pay.”⁴⁰⁹

Though her own news is grim, Amy is elated at good holiday news from Canada. Not only will Geoff be paying off a significant portion of his land in the new year, but his children have also gotten a pony:

“London has suffered badly since Christmas. How delighted the children will be with the Shetland pony. I wonder what its name is...

“It will be a relief to you to pay off the N. half of the land as the house is built on it.”⁴¹⁰

And in January 1941, Amy kicks off the new year with a bit of dark humour: she includes a card she has received from her sister Edith Turvey's grandson Ralph. He writes on the back of a postcard on which he has drawn enemy ships and submarines: “May this convoy best wishes for a very merry Christmas from Ralph to Aunty Amy.”⁴¹¹

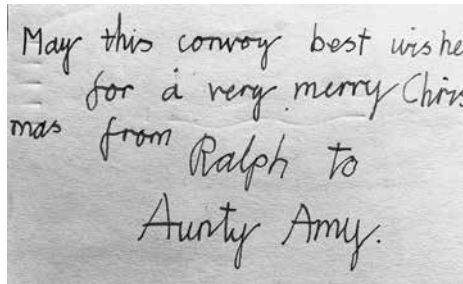
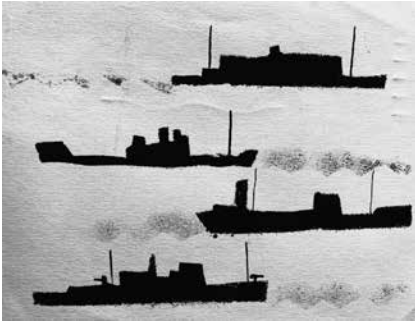


Amaret & Barbara go to school in a cart pulled by their Shetland pony. Early 1940s.

409 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. December 31, 1940. P.3.

410 *ibid.* p. 1.

411 Postcard. Ralph Turvey to his Aunt Amy Hewson. Christmas 1940.



Ralph Turvey's postcard drawing and Christmas 1940 note to his great-aunt "Auntie Amy."

Air raids become common

Amy keeps herself active and productive during the day, but at night it is harder to evade the reality of war: "Well, we are in the midst of war. There have been several air raids on the E. & S.E coasts & the Midlands. Auntie N. says troop trains were passing every fifteen minutes carrying men from Dunkirk & she saw 2 long hospital trains."⁴¹²

On January 18, 1941, Amy shares how much has changed, so much so that she doubts her son would recognize his hometown:

"We have had several quiet days & nights & are very thankful...you Geoffrey would see a great change in England. No lights at night, sand bags at short intervals by lampposts & in porches & on landings. Shopkeepers are very used to saying "Sorry we have not got any." Their shelves are emptying. Even vegetable shops have to fill most of their windows with sacks of potatoes! As the fruit is so scarce. But cabbages, sprouts, carrots, swede turnips, parsnips are plentiful & all the necessities of life. Fish is a little more plentiful."⁴¹³

As the war builds steam, residents become accustomed to air raid sirens waking them from their sleep. To defend from German bomber planes, search lights sweep the night skies and British airplanes drone overhead constantly.⁴¹⁴ All this activity makes undisturbed sleep difficult, if not impossible. Each time there is a siren, residents are expected to get out of bed, get dressed and go to

412 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. July 23, 1940. P. 1.

413 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. January 18, 1941. P. 1.

414 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. December 14, 1939. P. 3-4.

the safest place in their home. Amy describes several incidents, including this one in the summer of 1940:

“We have had two air raid warnings this week but the All-Clear signal followed in less than ½ hour & I believe in each case the raider was shot down. No damage was done, probably they were sea mines they were laying. I just dressed quickly & came down into the hall by the pantry door & sat there as the opinion is that is the most protected place.”⁴¹⁵

Just five days before Christmas 1940, there are several days of heavy bombing:

“A good many ships have gone down. We have just heard firing probably at a plane, but no bombs & it was over in a few minutes. Geoffrey does not seem at all frightened.

“...Guns are firing now!! The Chittendens had a bomb in their garden the last bad raid it knocked down a wall & most of their windows blew out. Fortunately they were not hurt, but they felt the shock.

“Saturday—The raid was a very bad one & lasted from 6:30 until 3 o'clock this morning when the “All Clear” went. They came over in constant waves. We sat wrapped up under the stairs until 2 when we went to bed. I am afraid much damage must have been done.

“Sunday—Another very bad raid last night lasting again until 4 in the morning. On Friday night, Harold saw the roof & pinnacle of the church where I was married destroyed by a bomb. He happened to be at the station close by.”⁴¹⁶

The raids continue through 1941:

“Sunday 12th—The raid on Thursday was severe, they say 200 planes were over Merseyside—many houses were damaged but not here—People keep coming to find houses or apartments after their houses are destroyed... poor things...”⁴¹⁷

415 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. July 27, 1940. P. 2.

416 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. December 20, 1940. P. 3-5.

417 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. January 9, 1941. P. 5.

Harold becomes a warden

Local citizens, including Harold, volunteer to be air raid wardens in their neighborhood as part of the Air Raid Precautions Act (ARP), which had been passed by Parliament in 1937. Each volunteer is trained and fitted with a kit containing a steel helmet to protect them from falling shrapnel or debris; a higher grade of gas mask than issued for civilians; wardens overalls which makes it easier for them to move around bomb sites when checking for casualties or putting out firebombs; a ceiling pike for testing unsafe ceilings after an attack; a gas rattle to warn neighbors of an imminent attack; a first aid kit; a stirrup pump and hose to put out small fires, and report forms. Their jobs were vital to the defense of everyday citizens like the Hewsons, Waters, Coxes, Turveys, and their neighbours:

“Air raid wardens were the first link in the chain of Britain’s civil defence system. Wardens worked from a network of wardens’ posts, which were connected to higher command by telephone or messenger. When bombing raids occurred, wardens on duty had to monitor and report bomb damage. This form sets out how these reports were to be made—accurate information like this could be vital for saving lives and protecting important buildings from damage.”⁴¹⁸

Amy describes the wardens, their helmets, and the stirrup pumps:

“Each warden has a street allotted to him mostly in case of fire I think & stirrup pumps which emit a fine spray or full current as desired are allotted to each road. Householders subscribe to the cost...it takes 3 people to work these—one holds the hose pipe & directs the current & one pumps (the heaviest work) & the third one keeps refilling the bucket.”⁴¹⁹

“Wardens wear steel helmets to protect them from shrapnel when they are out patrolling.”⁴²⁰

On February 17, 1941, just as Amy is writing a letter describing a visit that day from two wardens, a raid is signaled while Harold is on duty:

418 *8 Objects Used by Air Raid Wardens During the Blitz. Imperial War Museums.* Found 9/27/21 at <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/8-objects-used-by-air-raid-wardens-during-the-blitz>.

419 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. July 27, 1940. P. 2.

420 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. November 1, 1940. P. 4.



A newspaper clipping showing an image of the official gas mask for babies. Amy enclosed this in a January 21, 1941 letter to Geoff & Susan in Canada. Unknown publication. 1941.

“This afternoon two Air Wardens came to see if our gas masks are right. All masks have to be inspected...The alert has just sounded. Harold will be on duty as Warden or Fire Spotter. Each house has had a small sack of sand delivered to it, & all are expected to have buckets of water ready & bath with water in.”⁴²¹

Though everyone has a gas mask (one was even designed for infants), there would never be a gas attack by Germany on England. And though bombs are very much on their minds, the average citizen seems to not be so concerned about a gas attack:

421 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. February 17, 1941.

“The war seems to be spreading, and we wonder what Hitler is planning—whether invasion & gas attack—but most of England has so much windy coast that gas one would expect to soon be dispersed.”⁴²²

While cleaning out the attic to allow for the fire brigade to put out a potential roof fire, another measure outlined in the ARP, Amy finds some long-stowed treasures that make her nostalgic:

“...We have been very busy emptying our attics. Everything has to be cleared out so that if need be, the pumps can be used without obstacle. We have had a time as you can imagine, it is very dirty up there—all sorts of things were unearthed. Grandfather (Major Waters) grand uniforms. Brilliant scarlet fine cloth with much gold braid & high stock collar—also his short sword & enormous hat burdened with gold decorations & his military coat with cape & gold buckle—also a little ivory toy (Chinese) with ivory men swinging on a crossbar—all wonderfully made of ivory—this was given my father by Uncle Tom (Susan’s great grandfather). There were also two little Indian canoes made of tree bark & decorated Indian fashion with pair of oars & an Indian [illegible] with basket in one—also pr. of small snowshoes (toys). These were brought by Will Gilpin (Mary Gilpin’s husband) many many years ago & look quite new. They were put away so carefully. Lots & lots of boxes of all kinds.”⁴²³

Despite all the fear and danger surrounding her, Amy displays the stoic British spirit best: “Don’t be uneasy about us. England has a way of muddling through.”⁴²⁴

422 *ibid.*

423 *ibid.*

424 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. August 8, 1940. P. 6.

Chapter 23

Brian Fights His Own War

AFTER RETURNING TO ENGLAND, Brian gets his first evaluation and treatment at the York Retreat, a unique facility founded in 1792 by a compassionate Quaker tea merchant named William Tuke.⁴²⁵ The retreat's philosophy would dramatically change how mental illness was viewed and treated:

“It [the York retreat] has the distinction of having been the first establishment in England where mental illness was regarded as something from which a person could recover, and patients were treated with sympathy, respect and dignity...The Retreat had a profound influence on public opinion, resulting ultimately in fundamental reform of the laws relating to mental illness and its treatment. It occupies a central place in the history of psychiatry. Every textbook on the subject mentions the unique part played by it in the reshaping of attitudes to people who are mentally ill.”⁴²⁶

425 *History of the Retreat. The Retreat.* Found 10/12/21 at <https://theretreatyork.org.uk/our-history/>.

426 *The Retreat, York England.* Quakers in the World. Found 10/12/21 at <https://www.quakersintheworld.org/quakers-in-action/92/The-Retreat-York-England>.

Tuke had built the hospital on beautiful grounds, believing in the importance of nature for healing. Here Brian is treated with humanity in an environment that values his life.⁴²⁷

The second institution was what Brian refers to in his letters as “Chester Hospital.” The hospital’s official name at that time was County Mental Hospital but it had formerly been known as the Cheshire County Lunatic Asylum, opened in 1829 for the treatment of serious mental illness such as severe depression, schizophrenia, and bi-polar disorder. In an interesting coincidence, Chester Hospital’s main building, called the Deva, was built in 1829 by William Quay, and its design was apparently inspired by the York Retreat.⁴²⁸ It would serve as a war hospital during the First World War. At the time Brian is being treated there, he is among nearly 2,000 in-patient psychiatric cases.⁴²⁹

Brian is unhappy at Chester, especially in the first couple of years. In February 1938, he writes to Geoff to try and get him some of Brian’s money in a Canadian bank, which Amy discusses in a letter to Geoff:

“Brian wrote you for some money, but I told him you could not possibly get money out of his account—he has a great idea of buying a motorcycle—three out of his department have been discharged—but it will be some time yet I think before he will be.”⁴³⁰

Brian sleeps in a dormitory in the men’s building of the hospital, which was not the safest during a time of epidemics, like scarlet fever: “The man with scarlet rash has been moved from next to me for which I am very thankful as it made me itchy although the rash did not break out on me.”⁴³¹ Luckily, he never becomes ill while there, though he does have trouble with his teeth and has some pulled by the hospital’s resident dentist.

Amy makes sure that Brian receives regular visits from herself, the Aunties when possible, his sister Bar and husband Harold, and Amy’s nephews, Norman and John (Jack) Turvey.

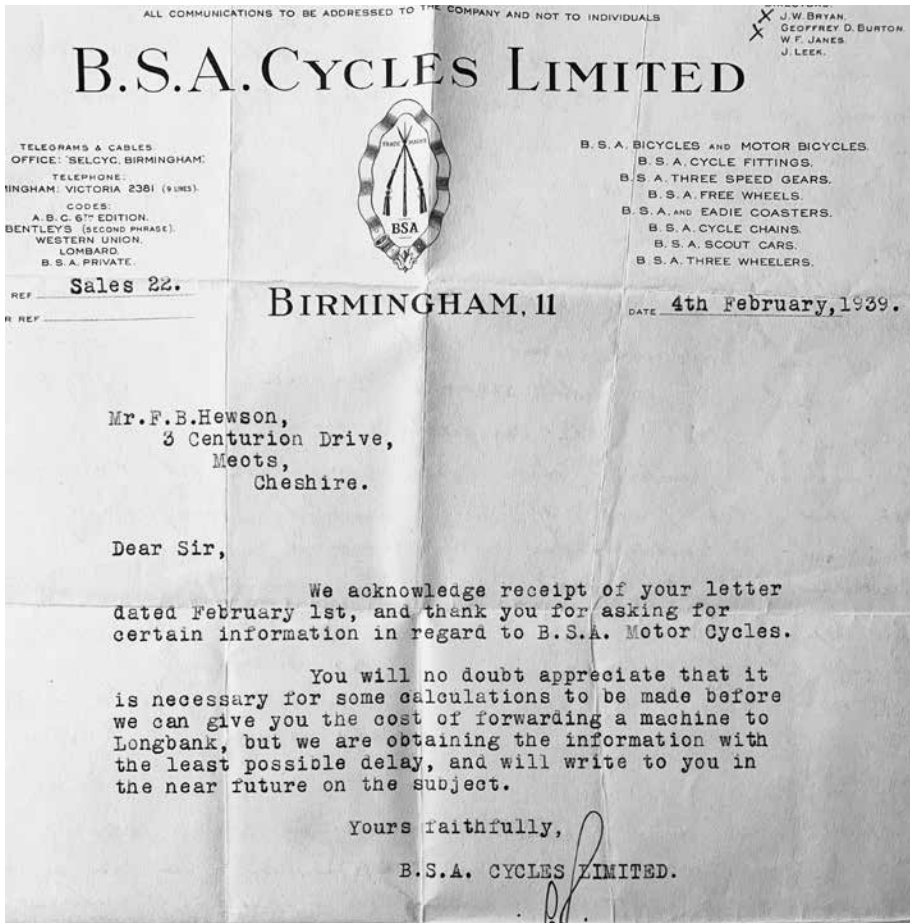
427 Up until the mid 1900s, those with mental illness who sought help were essentially imprisoned in institutions with little or no effective treatment. Others were actually put in jail. Many were maltreated and seeking a cure was not the goal, or even seen to be possible—removing the afflicted from the community was the main goal. For more: <https://batonrougebehavioral.com/the-surprising-history-of-mental-illness-treatment/>.

428 *Asylum. Chester Wiki*. Found 10/12/21 at <http://chester.shoutwiki.com/wiki/Asylum>.

429 *Local government and public services: Medical services. British History Online*. Found 9/9/21 at <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/ches/vol5/pt2/pp49-58>.

430 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. February 26, 1938. P. 1.

431 Letter. Brian Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. December 15, 1938. P. 1.



Brian believed he would soon be released from Chester Hospital, and wanted a motorcycle delivered to Langbank for when he returned to the farm, but it was not to be. This letter was written to Brian ("F.B. Hewson") on February 4, 1939.

One nearly weekly visitor to Brian is Captain Cox, Harold's father. As a posthumous favor to the deceased Frank Hewson who had been a fellow captain and close friend of his, and to Amy, Captain Cox makes regular visits to Brian for years, often accompanied by his wife Annie or daughter Dorothy. After visits, the Captain often sends the family a report on how he found Brian. In one, he writes to Geoff about having asked Brian to get permission to have tea with him in Chester the following week, saying "I think he enjoys the break even if his companion is a mouldy headed old castaway."⁴³²

432 Letter. Captain Frank Cox to Geoff & Susan Hewson. August 4, 1941. P. 1.

Amy is immensely grateful for the continued loyalty and support of the Coxes, especially during the winters and after the onset of the war. Amy asks Geoff to be extra kind to the Coxes, now and always, because of this.

In numerous letters, Amy writes of ongoing efforts to have Brian released for weekend and holiday home visits. Even though she and other family members and friends who visit Brian regularly see him greatly improved, the doctors disagree:

“Auntie E & I went to see Brian on Wednesday & found him improved. He answered any question at once with no hesitation & took interest in all we said & also in the other visitors, & patients in the same room. I wrote the Doctor but he says there is no real improvement in the mental condition—that he still suffers from ‘voices’ & is still deluded.

“The attendants all say he has improved & say (without our asking) that they all like him & that he is very helpful & gives no trouble. We are hoping he may be able to do joinery or something to give him employment in which he would be interested.”⁴³³

In April 1939, Amy has learned from a hospital attendant that Brian is better: “...he had asked him if he still heard voices & he said no he did not—he also does not talk to himself & takes interest in others. He is very bent on returning to Canada.”⁴³⁴ As a result, she writes the superintendent of the hospital asking for her son to be released for a weekend visit home, but her request is denied. Her story to Brian’s brother Geoff is a sad and familiar one to the families of those whose loved ones are hospitalized long term for mental illness:

“...it has been a great disappointment to us all. I had everything ready for him—his clothes packed ready to take when we went for him & his bed aired & ready. However we will try again before long. It must have been a sad disappointment to him...”⁴³⁵

It appears the doctors were correct. Just a month after the war starts on September 1, 1939, with Germany’s invasion of Poland, Brian writes a letter to his brother that reveals he still suffers from delusions and an unstable condition:

433 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. November 13, 1938. P. 1-2.

434 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. April 16, 1939. P. 1.

435 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. April 23, 1939. P. 1.

“If they do not let me out by Christmas I think it would be as well to put my case in the hands of the Canadian mounted Police, & let them come to England & get me out, if they will. I do not think it is safe for you to come to England, after what I have gone through. York does not care whether they use a man right or wrong, & do not take any notice of what you say, just stay with their own known business friends & I suppose Scotland Yard...”

“...Canada’s first battalion is coming over shortly after New year, so I thought it would be best for them to know why they are going to war, & if England put me into fighting in peace time, then the soldiers are really fighting for me & the trouble is in England not Europe as the saying goes “British never shall be Slaves.” So the first concession the Canadian Army should ask London if I could return to Canada, & if not, not to go to war till I return. I don’t see why I should be held here by moneyed men, who have probably never been in the fighting themselves.

“It would be different even if I were in a hospital that had reasonable meals, why I am classed as a slum is more than I can understand or dole person & not allowed out by myself.

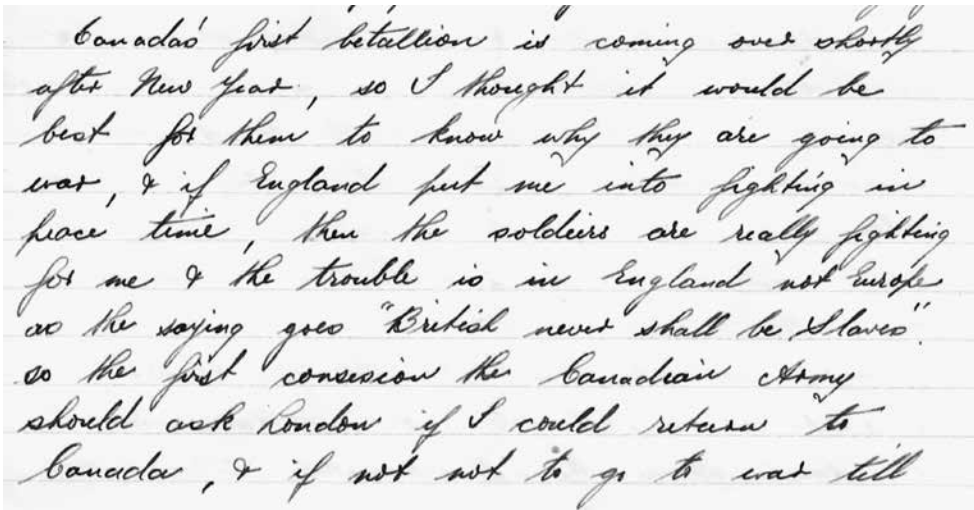
“...I am ready to shoot the person who is holding me here for the Mounted Police in return for the Mounted that got shot near Estevan if they like & then stand trial, as I am certain I am correct...”

“...I do not like writing this kind of a letter as it makes you think I am so ill, but when war is on, it is really only an active service message, I told you in other words before the war started & I don’t think it will frighten you any more than if you were out trapping.”⁴³⁶

In his letters, Brian shows his vigorous interest in the agricultural news in Canada and his desire to return to farming there, so to help him keep up to date, Geoff and Susan gift him with a subscription to the *Winnipeg Free Press* and copies of the John Deere magazine, which Brian reads religiously, often commenting on issues in his letters to them and making suggestions about the farm’s development. In October 1939, he suggests the building of a windbreak on their land: “I think we should plough a strip 50 yds wide, from the hill by K [Kirkbride] house to the Munroe wind break for trees for the year after @ a yard apart it would take about 26,000 trees or cuttings.”⁴³⁷

436 Letter. Brian Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. October 8, 1939. P. 1-4.

437 Letter. Brian Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. October 22, 1939. P. 1.



Canada's first battalion is coming over shortly after New Year, so I thought it would be best for them to know why they are going to war, & if England put me into fighting in peace time, then the soldiers are really fighting for me & the trouble is in England not Europe as the saying goes "British never shall be Slaves" so the first question the Canadian Army should ask London if I could return to Canada, & if not not to go to war till

Brian's letters mirrored his mental state. Some were quite lucid, while others, like this example written to Geoff & Susan, showed an episode of instability. October 8, 1939.

In another he says, "the paper...said wheat in Liverpool was the lowest since Queen Elizabeth's reign 300 years ago, yet it is not that low in Canada as when the rate of exchange went to \$3.25."⁴³⁸ He also recalls the moving of the Wrangham buildings on their land:

"The lifting of the submarine *Thetis* reminds me of the moving of the Wrangham's buildings, they keep breaking something. The latest way they used 9" cable, 8 of them, & then they broke the winch, & two men got hurt."⁴³⁹

Jack Turvey also kindly visits his cousin Brian in the Chester Hospital. In January 1940, he reports:

"You will have been glad to think of Brian being so much freer of late and getting about Chester City occasionally with visitors. I do not see him as often as I could wish these days of petrol restrictions, but on the last occasion he seemed to be living a much more normal life and to be filling in his time to great advantage and taking more interest in meeting people, which you will agree is very much to the good."⁴⁴⁰

438 Letter. Brian Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. July 14, 1939. P. 1.

439 Letter. Brian Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. July 24, 1939. P. 1.

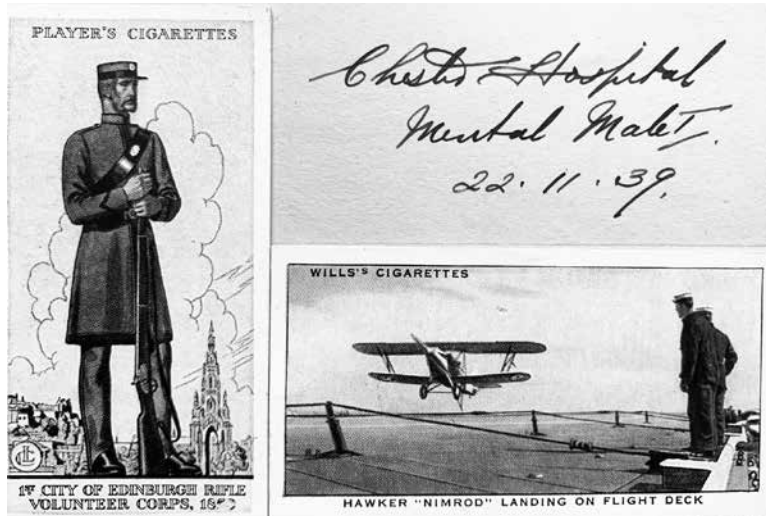
440 *ibid.*

The next month, Harold Mills visits Brian and also reports him to be improved, but his doctors are still not ready to discharge him:

“Harold said he could not see anything wrong with Brian & indeed he was absolutely normal all the time—afterwards he saw the Dr. & asked him if he was not fit to come home, but he said that some days he is quite all right but other times he speaks of some wireless exchange that he should be directing in Canada or some other imagination. He is much more cheerful. He sees papers & magazines & takes part in the various duties.”⁴⁴¹

In July, Brian writes a letter to his mother and sister in which he hints that he thinks his situation is worse because his father is no longer alive: “There are men that have been allowed to go home in far less time than I have had to stay, the only difference is they had their fathers to claim them out.”⁴⁴²

Amy is relieved when, after begging the hospital superintendent for Brian to have some employment to help keep his boredom at bay, Brian is finally given a job in the hospital’s butchery and later, the bakery. This activity, along with



In a November 22, 1939 letter to his mother, sister & aunts, Brian enclosed some collector cigarette cards popular at the time depicting various British war uniforms. The card series was intended to help promote support for Britain’s involvement in World War II.

441 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. February 11, 1940. P. 2.

442 Letter. Brian Hewson to Amy Hewson & Barbara (Hewson) Mills. July 19, 1940. P. 4.

increasing freedom on the grounds and in the local community of Chester, makes Brian a bit more comfortable with staying there, however he writes: “Since I have farmed on my own with Geoff, I do not like working under anyone, as their ways do not always suit me.”⁴⁴³

By Christmas, 1940, the doctors are still not ready to let Brian visit home, though Amy seems to think he is: “Auntie M & I went to see Brian on Wednesday & the Dr. would not let him come home for Xmas but he seems quite well—I think they are over careful as the responsibility is theirs...”⁴⁴⁴

As the war years wear on, so does Brian’s stay at Chester Hospital, but he remains ever anxious to return to Canada and take up farming with his brother and Bob Cairns again.

443 *ibid.*

444 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. December 20, 1940. P. 2.

Chapter 24

Learning a New Way of Life

BY 1941, NIGHTTIME AIR RAIDS and shortages of everything from food to coal to paper have become a big part of Amy's and her family's lives in Meols. Weekly food rationing determines the daily diet:

“We are now getting $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. butter & 4 oz. margarine. We can have 2 oz. tea, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. sugar, $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. bacon every week & $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. marmalade or jam or syrup a month. Also at present 1/- worth of meat—all these being for one person. Fish, fowls and rabbits are not rationed, but most of these are expensive or unobtainable.” However we manage all right. We hear that millions of eggs are to be sent from U.S.A.”⁴⁴⁵

Amy can do most of the tasks she's given by her country but having tea without sugar isn't one of them. While thanking Geoff and Susan for a recent parcel that contained some, she writes: “I tried hard to like tea without sugar, but to me it tastes then like medicine.”

445 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. July 13, 1941. P.1.

Sunday Feb. 11th 1940. 3 Centuries since
 Meols
 Dear Susan & Geoff. Many thanks for your
 welcome letter rec'd yesterday. posted 22 Feb.
 This paper must be 100 years old - it came
 from Grandfather's at Hook, but it is rather like
 blotting paper. Well the snow has
 mostly gone, but still laid where it was
 in heaps. We are glad to see it as the roads
 have been blocked up. Cars & Buses could
 not get up the hill at W. Kirby - a Bus
 had to be dug out at Stonehall - cars had
 to be abandoned. Even yesterday Dr. Birch
 had a spade in his car as he had to dig
 himself clear previous days. We are still

Century-old paper of Captain Waters' Sr. that Amaret used in WWII for letters. 1940.

Amy writes on anything she can find: "This paper must be 100 years old because it came from Grandfather's (Thomas Sr.) at Hook, but it is rather like blotting paper."⁴⁴⁶

Growing danger

As things get more dangerous for the residents at Meols, Amy writes: "What a lot of trouble one wicked man can cause, but if others did not back him up, he could not succeed—it's the cruel army spirit of Germany."⁴⁴⁷

On October 6, 1940, the anniversary of her husband Frank's birthday, Amy is moved to compare those in power to her own grandfather, Thomas Waters Sr. and his discipline and leadership:

446 *ibid.* p. 1.

447 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. August 16, 1940. P.6.

1) 89 Ju. Catterill 10th

Date	Crime	Punish.	By whom	Signatures
1835	7 Crimes in, etc. Boat			
20 Dec.	a Tattoo	forgiven	Capt. Waters	M. Waters

Sunday. Dec^r. This is Daddy's birthday - The war would have worried him very much. It is pouring with rain. This paper was last written on by Grandpapa (Major Waters) & you will see he forgave the crimes! Some of the Officers were very hard & often ordered flogging, but not Grandpapa. It is pouring with rain at last.

Paper documenting Thomas Waters Sr.'s punishment for a sailor getting a tattoo in 1835.

“This is Daddy’s [Frank’s] birthday. The war would have worried him very much... This paper was last written on by Grandpapa [Major Waters] & you will see he forgave the crimes! Some of the officers were being very hard & often ordered flogging, but not Grandpapa.”⁴⁴⁸

By Good Friday the following year, travel restrictions are also in place.

Country life

In the late spring of 1941, with danger growing, Amy and her daughter’s family leave the family home in Meols and head to the countryside for more remote and safer areas. They first go to a house in northeastern Wales, near a village called Cilcen, where they have made several day visits to before. Bar describes it:

“Here we are in our mountain home... the ground, being so high up the mountain, is very rough, both for a lady of 75 & a babe of 20 months. Mother can’t walk as she could so is very cut off here as we can’t get down to the road without walking for ½ hour & then it is a terrific pull up.”⁴⁴⁹

Bar has a lot on her plate with two young children and her mother Amy to look after. Though Amy has “picked up wonderfully” since arriving there and

448 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. October 6, 1940. P.1.

449 Letter. Barbara (Hewson) Mills to Geoff & Susan Hewson. May 25, 1941. P.2.

the children are “thriving in the mountain air,” Bar is busy every day, and in their inaccessible location, even getting food is an ordeal:

“I have to carry most of the food in a rucksack from Mold which is about 6 miles away. I can get a bus every 2 miles. The trip takes me 4 hours there & back, so I only go once a week because I don’t like leaving Mother so long...Baby won’t be trained & the washing takes so much longer carrying the water so far...”⁴⁵⁰

Their four-room cottage on an estate has a very good cook who makes the residents very comfortable, but it is “rather cramped for nine people.”⁴⁵¹

Amy puts a good face on for her Canadian granddaughters Amaret and Barbara in a postcard written from her new digs, where they are preparing for grandson Geoffrey’s fifth birthday:

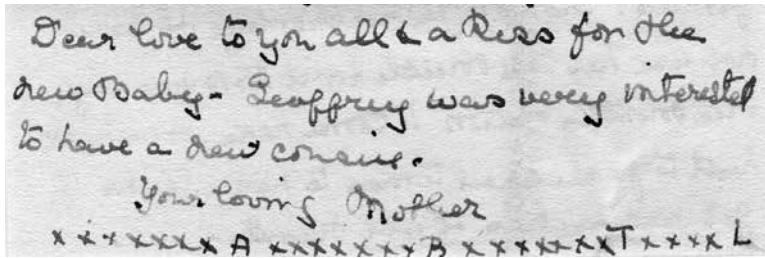
“...I expect you are having nice weather now. It is quite cool where we stay. We are so high up. This is a picture of a village near, but it is more lonely where we are. Geoffrey likes to collect wood for the fire, he finds a lot on the ground under the trees & sometimes he saws off pieces with his small saw. He will be five years old tomorrow & is going to have a little



The village near where Amy and the Mills family stayed during WWII. This image on a postcard Amy wrote to her granddaughters Amaret and Barbara in Canada. June 13, 1941.

450 Letter. Barbara (Hewson) Mills to Geoff & Susan Hewson. May 25, 1941. P.4.

451 *ibid.* p. 4.



Amaret's XXXs for each of her grandchildren. Geoff & Susan's family in Canada has been growing and now includes two daughters and two sons. 1941.

tea party with two of the girls who stay here. He is having a cake, iced with chocolate, & some pink blanc mange.⁴⁵² We cannot get any jelly now. Love & kisses to all three of you from Grannie Hewson."⁴⁵³

Amy is always thinking of her grandchildren so far away. At the end of every letter to Geoff and Susan, she sends kisses to her grandchildren with X's and the first letter of each grandchild's name...so this list grows longer with the birth of each child.

A farm in Yorkshire

On July 1, 1942, Amy and the Mills family set out by car from Castell Farm in the morning and arrive late afternoon at their new destination, a farm in the pastoral Yorkshire countryside. Foster Cliff Farm, Silsden Moor in Silsden, Yorkshire, has been owned by the Walker family for two centuries and Amy likes it much better than their previous location:

"It is very pleasant here. Very pretty scenery, little dells and streams & hills & great trees at interval...We are glad to be here & not in our small space at Cilcen—it was too crowded to be healthy, altho' so great space [illegible] & lovely air outdoors. Here the thick stone walls & floor make rooms cool—the postman came in thankfully & said how cool it was—his postvan was like an oven he said. He usually comes in for a little chat &

452 A classic British dessert made with milk or cream and sugar thickened with rice flour, gelatin, corn starch or Irish moss, and often flavoured with almonds. It is usually set in a mould and served cold. Although traditionally white, blancmanges are frequently given alternative colours. For more: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blancmange>.

453 Postcard. Amy Hewson to granddaughters Amaret & Barbara Hewson. June 13, 1941.

sometimes a cup of tea. All the people are very pleasant, sometimes it is not easy to understand those who speak broad Yorkshire, but we like the people. They seem straight forward & fair dealing.”⁴⁵⁴

It is far away from the terrifying night air raids of Meols and Amy appreciates their newfound sense of security and calm:

“There is nothing here to attack. We are surrounded by fields, all with stone walls—loose stones built up—quite an art. Mr. Walker is very good indeed to us—says we shall not starve & he keeps his word. We often too have beautiful lettuces given to us & kale which is like cabbage—we had some today—there is a big field of it; he told us to help ourselves to it. There are a lot of sheep & now they are enjoying themselves in a big hay field...”⁴⁵⁵

Bombs have recently damaged homes on Centurion Drive back in Meols, but happily the damage is minimal:

“Both 3 & 15 [Centurion Drive] are at present in good order. Aunties’ house had drawing room window broken & some tiles off roof & window [illegible] sprung—my house had no damage, though No. 1—further from bombs—had several windows broken.”⁴⁵⁶

The weather is beautiful, and their accommodations next to the main farmhouse are cozy and spacious. Amy is trying to convince the Aunties to come and stay with the family, where there is room for them to sleep in a sitting room off the living room. The Aunties are letting their house out for a few months, and Amy comments: “...at £2-2-0 per week—a very low rent for accommodation but they think they have good careful tenants & don’t want to make out of other people’s misfortunes.”⁴⁵⁷ Amy thinks her house may be rented as well soon:

“I rather expect my house to be let too but am awaiting news from Mrs. Ringham (Aunties’ neighbour) who wanted it for a bombed out Wesleyan Minister. I have so often invited the Coxes to come, but they have not decided to come, but I must write to them when I hear from Mrs. Ringham.”

454 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. July 13, 1941. P.2.

455 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. July 20, 1941. P.4-5.

456 *ibid.* P.1.

457 *ibid.* P.3

The Yorkshire farmhouse was built in 1631 & is very quaint:

“...it has an immense kitchen with stone floor, also a large living room with stone floor & a sitting room rather smaller off the living room. Each of the bigger rooms having an outer door at front of house. There is a long passage behind with stairs to bedroom, larder with stone slab all round, also down to cellar or dairy with stone slabs round & stone slabs at table height down one side of the passage. Upstairs there are three larger bedrooms all to the front & a long passage connecting them with small room used at present as a box [illegible] room.

“There are a very great number of outbuildings for numerous cattle & horses & a huge, high implement building with great high roof. The farmer (Mr. Walker) who owns this has another house with all modern improvements on the main road & he farms this land. There is a big motor house [illegible]—a wee walled garden in front of the house & just across the very broad roadway another large garden with potatoes & weeds growing in it—there are gates at the entrances to the roadway so it is safe for the children & they much enjoy riding tricycle or wheeling toy pram up & down the long passages & big rooms.

“There is quite a lot of furniture—some very old—a grandfather’s chair with high back & arms & a sort of half roof to it, covered all in calfskin. Several old rocking chairs, a dower chest in oak & plate rack in oak with old china dishes, also a sort of tallboy—drawers underneath & roomy cupboards above. Some ladderback oak chairs & two large wardrobes in black oak with wooden knobs inside to hang clothes on—several fixed cupboards & drawers downstairs. Thick oak beams across the ceilings. Plenty of plates & many dishes etc. I expect the floors will be cold in winter. We have 5 tons of coal [illegible] & a quantity of wood. We found a Valor perfection paraffin oil stove in one outhouse & are using it. There is a wash hand basin on the upstairs landing & hot & cold tap. Also hot & cold water in the kitchen over the immense sink. Bar hopes to get a woman to come to clean a day a fortnight. We are very busy getting things arranged.”⁴⁵⁸



The Yorkshire farmhouse described in detail by Amy Hewson. Each point of interest is numbered on the photo and described in this legend on the back: 1—Geoff's room; 2—Bar & Harold's bedroom; 3—My bedroom; 4—Spare bedroom; 5—Front door; 6—Sitting room; 7—Back door; 8—Kitchen living room. Barbara Mills and children Elizabeth and Geoffrey are seated in front. 1941.

It's lovely, but remote:

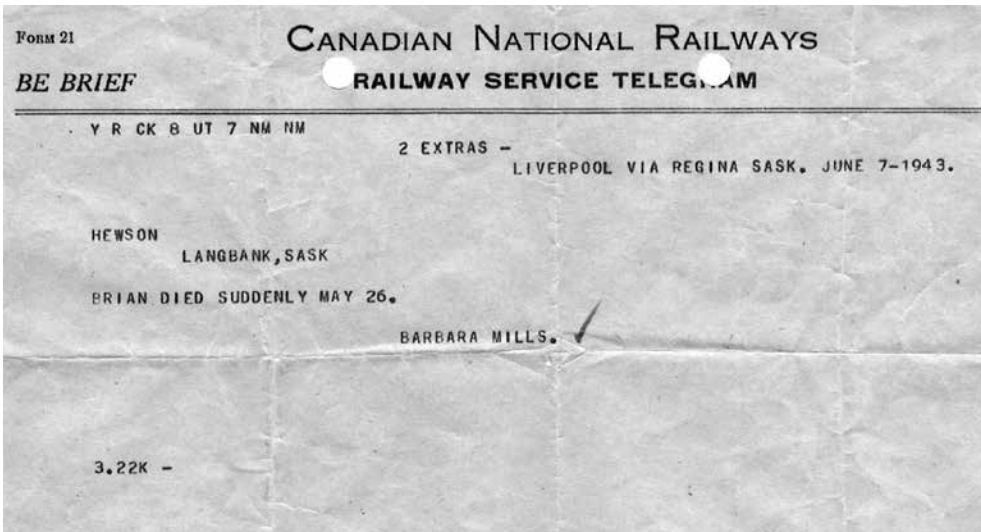
“Owing to petrol shortage H. cannot use his car much for it took nearly the month's ration to come here & we have had to go several times to near towns to get necessities of all kinds.... We are a long way from shops & have to go thru' one or two fields before we reach the road—there are several farms not far away.”⁴⁵⁹

Brian released—from hospital and from suffering

Eventually, Brian is released from County Mental Hospital. By 1943, he is living with his mother and family in the Yorkshire countryside, where they go to get away from the ongoing bombing raids in London.

While his letters now seem completely cogent and conversational, his schizophrenia may have still been plaguing him. On June 7, 1943, Geoff receives a telegram from his sister Barbara which reads, simply:

⁴⁵⁹ Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. July 13, 1941. P.5.



The shocking news of Brian's death travels to Geoff in Canada via this telegram from his sister Barbara. June 7, 1943.

“BRIAN DIED SUDDENLY MAY 26.” Though there is no known official record of how Brian dies, various members of the family believe he may have died by suicide.

On May 9, 1943, Brian had written a letter from Foster Cliff Farm in Silsden. There appears to be no indication that his mental condition had worsened in this letter, but it was written more than two weeks before he died. It would be his last letter, and fittingly it was to his brother Geoff:

“Dear Geoff & Susan,

“No letters this week. Mother has gone to stay with Aunties & I was in Leeds on Friday & noticed quite a lot of Canadian soldiers in the town. We are getting enough rain to keep plants growing we had about 1" last night & today.

“There is a play in Silsden called Hobson's Choice. Harold & Bar were going to go only it made it too much of a rush by the time he got back from L'pool.

“A hen hatched 10 chickens white leg ones. The hen has trodden on two.

“The war seems to be coming to an end in Africa so perhaps it will not be so long before there is a settlement of the rest.



Geoff & Brian in happier times. 1928.

“I bought a packet of razor blades from a man in the street selling them as it is hard to get them in shops & another lady paid 5/- a dozen & the control price was 2/- for Gillette utility blades so she called the police & he had to show his sale permit & he took his name so I do not know if he would get fined, anyway he said if you can get them anywhere else why did you not go there.

“We have a bed of lily of the valley just in flower which give off a strong perfume & anyone coming remarks on them.

“I planted out 200 lettuces & have the cabbage to do this week. The cauliflower seed does not seem much good as only a few plants have come up.

“I expect the cows to sleep out any night now only it has been wet windy or cold so we are waiting for it to turn warmer. One sheep had three lambs; they were all dead when W. Walker found them he thinks some steers must have trodden on them.

“From your loving brother Brian”⁴⁶⁰

460 Letter. Brian Hewson to Geoff & Susan Hewson. May 9, 1943.

After Brian dies, Geoff rarely speaks of his brother. Decades later, in the days leading up to his own death, Geoff's rambling mind seems to wander back to those days when he and Brian were farming side by side.⁴⁶¹

The Turveys

The other family who remains in close touch throughout the war are Amy's nephews, the Turvey boys, and their families—Norman (b. 1897), Jeanne and their son Brian (b. 1922); and Jack (also called John, b. 1898), Margaret and their son Ralph (b. 1927). Norman and Jack are Thomas Waters Sr.'s granddaughter Edith (Waters) Turvey's two sons. Therefore, the Turveys are one of the Waters lines of descendants who exist today.

Both Jack and Norman correspond with Geoff and Susan at the beginning and early years of the war, and both write with equal parts serious observation and great wit.

In 1940, Jack's son Ralph is thirteen years old, and we see early glimpses of his brilliance in his father's descriptions of him:

“Ralph thrives at school, & we discuss the war together and its probable outcome for mankind in general & at great length. He is at present immersed in a book on the strategy, tactics, weapons & personal of war, though I fear his gentle & friendly heart would never allow him to pull the trigger of a pop gun if it might do hurt. Meanwhile however, he watches our Ministers, Field Marshals & Admirals with an experienced and critical eye!”⁴⁶²

The next year, Jack shares with his mother some advice he has given to his ambitious son:

“...Ralph and I have been a short walk together discussing the pros and cons of correspondence courses in Secretaryship and Accountancy which he is very full of at the moment as a result of having received a handsome prospectus offering to develop his latent talent, coach him until proficient and treble his earning capacity which unbeknown to the senders now stands at 15/- per week. However, I have been successful in persuading

461 Interview with Margaret Hewson. Author. July 2019.

462 Letter. Jack Turvey to Geoff & Susan Hewson. January 6, 1940. P. 2.

him to keeping to Kingsmoor for another term or so and then perhaps to consider the matter again Perhaps you remember these ages of sudden enthusiasms and the danger of too much damping instead of leaving the solution to the kindlier hand of time..."⁴⁶³

Ralph would grow up to become one of the most distinguished economics students and then lecturers at the London School of Economics. He would also study at Uppsala in Sweden, where he became fluent in Swedish. One of his students said of him:

"In the immediate postwar period, Ralph was regarded as the most brilliant LSE undergraduate. [I] remember his ability to formulate the most abstruse problems, and then solve them. Ralph...had an astonishing facility for logical analysis."⁴⁶⁴

Ralph publishes a "long list" of economic papers and a book in 1971, *Economic Analysis and Public Enterprise*. In 1955 he would marry Sheila Bucher, and they would have a son, Nicholas and a daughter, Amanda. He would also work for Britain's Treasury, the Electricity Council and the National Board for Prices and Incomes.⁴⁶⁵

As mentioned in other parts of this book, Ralph's wife Sheila would become an important contributor to the family archives, writing histories of the Waters and Turvey families and contributing significantly to the transcription and documenting of Thomas Waters Sr. and Jr. and their families' lives through their letters and other personal documents.⁴⁶⁶

From Cousin Jack's letters, we know that Susan writes regular letters to Amy Hewson, which are shared with the British family:

"I see some of your letters when I visit Meols and always wonder how Susan has the time and patience to write so fully and so regularly to this side of the world. It always makes very good reading anyway and I am sure is much appreciated by the old folk in Centurion Drive."⁴⁶⁷

463 Letter. Jack Turvey to his mother, Edith. September 1, 1941. P.4.

464 *Ralph Turvey obituary*. *The Guardian.com*. Peston, Maurice. April 22, 2012. Found 11/07/21 at <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2012/apr/22/ralph-turvey>.

465 *ibid*.

466 As mentioned elsewhere, Sheila's valuable work has been relied upon heavily in the creation of this book. Her son Nicholas also assisted in providing materials to the book project.

467 Letter. Jack Turvey to Geoff & Susan Hewson. January 6, 1940. P.1.



A twenty-one-year-old Norman relaxing in his WW1 uniform in Meols. 1918.

Norman's tales of war-time life

Cousin Norman writes about life in England as the war gears up. He describes the rising costs, especially the cost of petrol; the government requiring more land to be sown to increase food supplies and other effects of the war. Food is scarce already: “Food rationing starts here next week & I imagine it will mean a great deal of fiddling work for me with the ration books of over 400 people to deal with.”⁴⁶⁸

Norman, raised in a family of Quakers, had been a pacifist ambulanceman⁴⁶⁹ in World War I and had been awarded the rare Croix de Guerre.⁴⁷⁰ He was stationed at Alsace where he met Jeanne Kaiser. They married shortly after the war ended. Their son Brian is born in 1922. By the onset of World War II, Brian is studying dentistry.⁴⁷¹

Norman is now Bursar at Ackworth, a Quaker boarding school in the west Yorkshire country town Pontefract—the same institution Barbara Bake attended

468 Letter. Norman Turvey to Geoff & Susan Hewson. February 1, 1940. P. 6.

469 *Turvey: Faith & Persistence*. Turvey, Sheila. 2020. P. 48. Norman was likely a volunteer with the Friends Ambulance Unit (FAU), which provided opportunities for active service to conscientious objectors. For more: <https://www.quakersintheworld.org/quakers-in-action/278/Friends-Ambulance-Unit-FAU-in-WWI>.

470 Medal of high honor given by the French in WWI and WWII. For more: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Croix_de_guerre_1914%E2%80%931918_\(France\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Croix_de_guerre_1914%E2%80%931918_(France)).

471 Brian would later marry Ann Wadsworth and they would have two daughters, Susan and Carolyn.

as a child nearly a century earlier in 1837.⁴⁷² The scarlet fever epidemic has been “rather bad” at Ackworth this term and war-related expenses plague the Bursar, who is responsible for costs:

“...33 cases of whom one boy of 12 died. The whole school is being fumigated and washed down this holiday in consequence. A great deal of work and expense....The Air Raid Precautions work at the school has so far cost about £600. You can imagine the hundreds & hundreds of yards of black cloth required for curtaining all the windows⁴⁷³ in the place.”⁴⁷⁴

The Turveys often lend a hand to their family. During the bombing of Merseyside in 1941, Edith and May take refuge at Norman’s home, and in 1943, Jack is helping the “old ladies at #3” in Meols. Harold Mills writes to Geoff:

“Jack Turvey came over from Knighton for a couple of days and was presented with a list of jobs at No 3, Centurion which would have made a professional plumber joiner odd jobman blanch. Fortunately, he is an engineer, nothing is impossible, so he came along here for tools and in a day performed a series of tasks which transcended far into the realms of the miraculous. They ranged from the attachment of cupboards to walls and the erection of kitchen shelves to the clearance of stopped drains and the provision of a new front gate latch. As Jack would certainly think it necessary to calculate exactly the stresses to be allowed for in all the operations, you will appreciate how wonderful his accomplishments were and how necessary it really is that his visits should be more frequent in order that contingencies should not arise to meet which the old ladies might call upon me. I could not possibly reach his standard.”⁴⁷⁵

It’s likely that Geoff is very grateful to his Turvey cousins, along with his brother-in-law Harold, for looking out for his mother during the frightening years of the war, since he cannot do so.

472 Barbara Bake marries Benjamin Waters, and is the grandmother of her namesake, Barbara “Bar” Hewson.

473 Blackout regulations were imposed on September 1, 1939, before the declaration of war. These required that all windows and doors should be covered at night with suitable material such as heavy curtains, cardboard or paint, to prevent the escape of any glimmer of light that might aid enemy aircraft. For more: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blackout_\(wartime\)#:~:text=Blackout%20regulations%20were%20imposed%20on,that%20might%20aid%20enemy%20aircraft.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blackout_(wartime)#:~:text=Blackout%20regulations%20were%20imposed%20on,that%20might%20aid%20enemy%20aircraft.)

474 Letter. Norman Turvey to Geoff & Susan Hewson. February 1, 1940. P.7.

475 Letter. Harold Mills to Geoff & Susan Hewson. November 23, 1943. P.2.

Chapter 25

The Other Side of the Pond

WHILE THE ENGLISH HEWSONS are braving out the uncertainties and dangers of the war, the Canadian Hewsons and relations are doing what they can to help.

Though the war is not on their shores, there is some food rationing in Canada, and those who are able pitch in help in the ways they can. Women like Janet (Cairns) Dickey and her youngest daughter Elizabeth, still at home, use their organizational and sewing skills to provide supplies:

“...During that time many of our evenings were spent knitting Red Cross socks or mitts, sewing pyjamas or filling ditty bags for sailors. Certain food items were rationed, and although it was never any great hardship for us, it was necessary for my Mother to keep a watchful eye on coupons for meat, sugar, tea, coffee, etc.”⁴⁷⁶

Geoff wants to enlist but he is already busy, an almost forty-year-old farmer with a growing family. In addition to Amaret and Barbara, Geoff and Susan now have their first son—Thomas Waters (b. May 6, 1938). The baby is named in honour of his parents’ common ancestor, Thomas Waters Sr., who was his



Thomas Waters is Geoff & Susan's first son, who is named for both Thomas Waters Jr. & Sr. 1938.

great-great-great grandfather on his mother's side and great-great grandfather on his father's side. Dr. Hilts will not approve Geoff's medical, saying that he can do more good farming than fighting overseas.⁴⁷⁷

Geoff is working hard, and his mother is concerned. He tells her he is hiring help on the farm, which makes her happy. She warns him: "You cannot, without damage, overdraw on the Bank of Life."⁴⁷⁸ By the spring of 1941, Geoff has paid off the quarter of land the house sits on, and Amy congratulates him: "I am very glad you (Geoff) managed without borrowing from Bank. Borrowing rhymes with something beginning with S!!! Anyway, one regrets having to pay interest."⁴⁷⁹

Geoff and Susan Hewson send packages from Canada to their relatives that are much appreciated during times of food rationing. Aunt May writes: "I want to say how much we enjoyed your cake & butter. The former was like wedding cake & the butter was so good & a great treat to us all, it was very kind of you to send it."⁴⁸⁰

Another parcel goes to Geoff's mother Amy and sister Barbara in their mountain home: "Mother was very pleased to receive your parcel & we are enjoying the first item, the sugar. We have it in our tea. It's a great treat as we'd

477 Interview with Margaret Hewson. Author. August 29, 2021.

478 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoffrey & Susan Hewson. April 16, 1939.

479 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoffrey & Susan Hewson. April 5, 1941. P.2.

480 Letter. May Waters to Geoffrey & Susan Hewson. February 8, 1941.

been foregoing this.” Amy also writes, thanking them for the sweets, bacon, and sugar. She is upset that she can’t send anything in return but promises to do so when things return to normal, though nobody expects the war to end any time soon.

Owen comes home, then enlists

Owen Cairns (son of John and Elsie Cairns and grandson to J.A. and Alice Cairns) returns from Teddington to the Langbank area in 1936 to work with his Uncle Bob at Cairnbank, as well as other area farmers like Geoff Hewson and John Dickey. But when war breaks out, Owen feels it is his duty to enlist. Bob tries to dissuade him, to no avail. Owen spends a month in the R.C.A. at Dundurn and in April 1941, he joins the R.C.A.F. Though he doesn’t go overseas, he serves almost the entire war. During this time, he marries Hilda Gravener⁴⁸¹



Owen & Hilda Cairns on their wedding day. Owen wears his R.C.A.F. uniform. 1942.

481 Daughter of Fred Gravener.

in July 1942. Hilda had worked in several homes in the area, including four years for Susan and Geoff Hewson.

Bob is short of help, as most young men have been conscripted, and he works hard to get through the red tape to have Owen released. The government doesn't want men getting out of the service, but food production is also a high priority, and reason to allow it. Finally, Owen is released shortly before the war is over.

After a few years of service and having gotten married, Owen is ready to return to the farm.

Helping hands hired

With men conscripted for the war effort, help is in short supply on the Hewson farm. Geoff had hired Bill West in the early '30s, but he enlists in the Air Force in 1938. In the early 1940s, Arthur Smith works for Geoff. Tom Hewson, Geoff's eldest son, recalls that Arthur was cutting wood in the south field on the day Franklin Roosevelt died in 1945. Arthur subscribes to the *Leader Post*, and the subscription is kept up even after he left and was continued until 2020 when rural delivery to Langbank was discontinued.

Gordon Penny starts work after the war, in 1949. He is paid one hundred dollars per month and forty dollars in the winter the first year. He works the summers of 1950-51 and leaves for Bible school at Caronport in the winter of 1952. Russel Wees arrives in the summer of 1953.⁴⁸²



Getting the job done. L to R: Geoff, Bill West, Owen Cairns, Roland Davies & Walter Kirkbride. 1940s.

482 *Tom Hewson Stories*. Hewson, Thomas. 2020. P. 5.

But of all the hired men, perhaps the most significant addition to the Hewson farm enterprise is Roland Davies, who comes to work at the farm in the 1940s. Roland was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba. He spent a few years working in the mines in Ontario before coming to work for Geoff Hewson, where he meets Frances McKillop, a local girl who is working for Susan Hewson. Roland and Frances are married at her parents' home⁴⁸³ on October 11, 1943, after which they both continue to work on the Hewson farm, and would be considered a part of the family. Later, Roland leaves to work for Bob Cairns and Roland and Frances live in a little house on the Cairns' farm. In 1949, they start on their own on the McKillop (Hogarth) farm. They have two children, Robert James (b. 1948) and Shirley Anne (1949).⁴⁸⁴ Roland Davies dies at the young age of fifty-three, on July 10, 1969. Frances Davies later writes of her husband: "Roland was a very jolly person, a good neighbor and friend to all, young and old."⁴⁸⁵

Hired men would help Geoff until the Hewson children become active in working on the farm in the '50s. The Canadian Hewsons continue to raise crops, animals and, importantly...babies.

War-time babies

Much of what is happening in Geoff and Susan's lives we know from letters to them from others. In 1940, Jeanne Turvey writes, "I love hearing news of your babes. Amaret must be quite a help to you in your home & Thomas sounds rather like Geoffrey. Barbara I think is the image of her father."⁴⁸⁶

In February 1941, when Susan is pregnant with their fourth child (Leonard Benjamin, born June 14), she gets a much-needed new appliance, which her Auntie May is curious about: "The new washing machine must be a great help. Do say in your letter to Grannie if it really will wash clean without using the board? I do enjoy washing clothes."⁴⁸⁷ When Leonard is born, Geoff is congratulated by family friend Captain Frank Cox on "his latest acquisition, Leonard Benjamin."⁴⁸⁸

483 Frances' parents Jim and Bertha McKillop were the couple that the Reverend had married just after his son, Tom, died in WWI.

484 *The McKillops. Langbank Memories*. Davies, Frances. 1984. P. 339.

485 *Ibid.*

486 Letter. Jeanne Turvey to Geoff & Susan Hewson. January 2, 1940. P.3.

487 Letter. May Waters to Susan Hewson. February 9, 1941.

488 Letter. Captain Frank Cox to Geoff & Susan Hewson. August 4, 1941. P.1.



L to R: Barbara (face covered), Thomas, Susan w/Robin on lap
& Leonard beside, & Amaret, sitting. 1943.

Nearly a year later, on May 16, 1942, Geoff and Susan's fifth child, Robin Christopher, is born. He is named Robin for the bird that is singing outside the window when he is delivered, and Christopher in honor of his great-great grandfather, the Reverend's father, Christopher Cairns.

Within his first month, baby Robin develops a serious medical condition called pyloric stenosis.⁴⁸⁹ In June, Susan takes the baby to Winnipeg for medical treatment. Her stay there of around two weeks is a time of great stress for the couple, and their forced separation causes them both to express their love and gratitude for each other. Susan's intimate letters tell the story of a mother with her sick infant far away from home, and of a father juggling farm work and childcare duties:

489 As described in Chapter 7, Susan's younger sister Mary Charlotte may have died of this condition. Pyloric stenosis is an uncommon condition in infants that blocks food from entering the small intestine. Surgery is required to correct it. Symptoms include vomiting after feeding, persistent hunger, stomach contractions, dehydration, and other issues. Without surgery, a baby can fail to grow and develop. For more: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/pyloric-stenosis/symptoms-causes/syc-20351416>.

“It is just a week since I saw you, and I shall be very glad indeed when I see you—and feel you—again. However, things look much brighter now than they did then...in another week I may see you, but we cannot count on it...they may want to keep Robin a few days longer. But if he stops vomiting I think he will likely pick up quickly and be fit to come home by the end of the week. Robin is four weeks old today.”

“...The more books I read on love and marriage the more I feel that we are fortunate in having security in each other and a life in which we can share many interests. Marriage is supposed to be more permanent in an agricultural civilization, and I think it must be true.

“...I hope it will be a happy homecoming next week, instead of a sad one as it might have been.”⁴⁹⁰

Susan expresses more of her views on marriage and her gratitude for her husband:

“My dear Husband,

Thank you for your latest letter, I appreciated it very much, I think it is the most loving letter you have ever written to me! But the other times when we have been apart you have been away and I have been at home, so now we have exchanged viewpoints. It seems absence makes your heart grow fonder, or perhaps you only mention it more. I do not need to be away from you to realize how fortunate I am in having you for a husband, I know very well I should not have got anyone who would suit me better.

“...I wish we were together again. I like the idea of speaking of a married couple as ‘pulling in double harness,’ that is how I always think of us.

“...It is much harder to go on alone, it would be very hard if the separation were permanent.”⁴⁹¹

Geoff has been so effusive in his letters, apparently, that Susan must remark once more on it, and reinforce her faith in him:

“You never used to write such loving letters! I am glad to know how much I mean to you, and I wish I were home with you, as you mean just as much to me.

490 Letter. Susan Hewson to Geoff Hewson. June 13, 1942.

491 Letter. Susan Hewson to Geoff Hewson. June 16, 1942. P. 1-2.

“... If I did not feel in my heart that you are the master of the house, the head of the family, I should not have so much respect for you, or for myself either, and I always feel that the final decision on any subject should be yours. Like the chairman of a meeting, after the subject is well talked over and voted upon if it is a tie, he casts the deciding vote.

“I wish I could put my head on your shoulder, and feel your strength. I find it rather wearying, waiting in waiting rooms and sitting alone in my room, however, if Robin only gets well soon I shall not mind so much, and he really looks stronger today. It is hardest for you all at home...”⁴⁹²

Eventually, Susan returns home with baby Robin, and Susan and Geoff’s marriage is no doubt strengthened even more.

The baby will need much of Susan’s time over the next while as he recovers from his illness, and in this regard, Frances and Roland Davies become important supplemental caregivers to the one-year-old Leonard:

“Robin was only 11 months younger than I was... Frances...mostly looked after me because Robin wasn’t well. I remember Frances about as much as my mother. I quite took to Roland too.”⁴⁹³

492 Letter. Susan Hewson to Geoff Hewson. June 18, 1942. P. 1-2.

493 Interview with Leonard Hewson. Hewson, Margaret & Cowan, Mark. 2019.

Chapter 26

War Ends, the Boom is On

HITLER COMMITS SUICIDE IN HIS BUNKER on April 30, 1945, and his successor starts peace negotiations a week later. Still, the war in the Pacific rages on, ending only with the tragic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and August 9. Finally, on September 2, the Japanese sign the surrender, which is accepted by the U.S. General Douglas MacArthur on board *U.S.S. Missouri*, surrounded in Tokyo Bay by a flotilla of more than 250 Allied warships.⁴⁹⁴ Six years and one day after Germany's invasion of Poland, World War II is over.

The end of the war ushers in a decade of booms: a booming economy, booming suburbs, and most of all, the “Baby Boom.” It begins in 1946, when a record number of babies are born. This record baby-making in North America will continue until 1964,⁴⁹⁵ and the families of the Waters line will all contribute their share to this phenomenon.

In May 1944, Owen and Hilda Cairns' first son James (Jim)⁴⁹⁶ is born, followed by Judy in 1948 and Dorothy in 1953. This family grows up in the frame house the Reverend and Alice had built in 1912.

494 *How Did World War II End?*History.com. Klein, Christopher. August 11, 2020. Found 8/31/21 at <https://www.history.com/news/world-war-ii-end-events>.

495 *The 1950s*.History.com. Found 9/31/21 at <https://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/1950s>.

496 Jim Cairns has a son Jay and grandson Jaxon, and they all bear the initials J.A. Cairns, like their great-grandfather Rev J.A. Cairns and their grandfather, his son, John A. Cairns, Jr.



Owen & son Jim Cairns (another 'J.A.' Cairns). Late 1940s.



An aerial image of Cairnbank from the 1950s.

The hard-working and energetic Owen is a good fit with his Uncle Bob. Tom Hewson describes Bob as progressive, moving toward new innovations when others didn't. And Jim Cairns says that his father Owen embraced everything new. No wonder they would make such successful partners in continuing to build the farming operation. In 1947, Owen and Hilda form a partnership with Bob and Elsie, and they farm together until Bob's death almost a decade later.

The Cox family is also growing. A letter received from Captain Cox to Geoff and Susan Hewson in 1940 heralds the impending birth of Harold and



Cox family without Roberta. Sadie & Harold with Janet & Donald. 1940s.

Sadie's first child by his signature—"the prospective grandpa."⁴⁹⁷ And by 1950, Harold and Sadie will have three children, Janet (b. 1940), Donald (b. 1943), and Roberta (b. 1950).

Meanwhile, the Hewson brood expands to seven with the birth of Heather in 1945 and Rosemary in 1947. Heather is the first Hewson child to be born in a hospital. Though Susan has always said she wanted a family of six, when she finds out she is having a seventh, she calls it an "added blessing."⁴⁹⁸

When Susan is in the hospital having Rosemary, she is assured of the abilities of her older daughters, Amaret and Barbara, to take care of their younger siblings, along with help from Frances Davies. In a letter to her mother in the hospital, Barbara reports:

497 Letter. Captain Frank Cox to Geoff & Susan Hewson. May 17, 1940. P.4.

498 Interview with Rosemary (Hewson) Cowan. Hewson, Margaret. 2019. Aunt Sadie Cox told Rosemary this when she got older.

“Dear Mother, Heather is the invalid now. She took sick Saturday night, and all day to-day she has rocked her doll with a quilt in the big rocking chair. She has been very, very good, and after dinner she slept from 1 or 1:30 to 20 minutes to four. She woke up last night crying “I want Mother.” But to-day she hasn’t said anything much about you. When she was sick about 10 or 10:30 P.M. she vomited but Frances didn’t take her temperature but she said Heather was very hot all over. This morn. when Amaret took her temperature it was $99 \frac{2}{5}$ I think. Tonight it was 100 and $\frac{2}{5}$. She is much better now. Leonard is alright now he got up this morn. After breakfast and after 4 he could stand it no longer so he put on his winter coat and hat and went out...

“I s’pose the new baby’s name is Rosemary? Was she born Sat. or Sun? How much does she weigh? I wonder when you will be coming home. L., R., and H., are looking forward for more balloons.”⁴⁹⁹



Susan on her front steps, feeding baby Rosemary (in high chair).
Heather, sitting in front, looks on. 1948.

499 Letter. Barbara Hewson to her mother Susan Hewson. August 10, 1947.

Chapter 27

Susan Leaves a Legacy

“... a worker [building a cathedral] was carving a tiny bird on a beam that would be covered by the roof, and someone asked him, Why are you spending so much time on something no one will ever see?

The builder replied, Because God sees.”

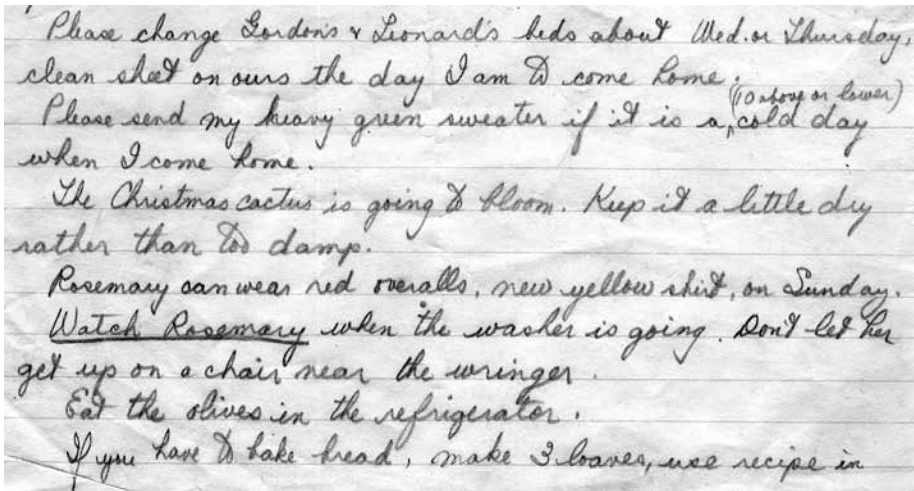
—THE INVISIBLE WOMAN (PREVIEW)

BY NICOLE JOHNSON. MAR 20, 2008.

“Residents of the community of Poplar Grove were shocked and saddened on Thursday, November 3rd, 1949, by the news of the passing of Mrs. G.M. Hewson,” writes the local newspaper. Susan Dickey Hewson’s death at age thirty-nine is due to complications following an operation to remove an ovarian cyst in Whitewood Hospital, but only the day before is there any indication given that she is dangerously ill from deep vein thrombosis which creates a fatal embolism.⁵⁰⁰

Susan shows her typical forethought and organized mind at this moment, making a detailed list before she goes into surgery. She writes to whoever will be in charge, “please leave the washer a little cleaner than you found it. It has to be traded in, and I’ve taken off quite a lot of grease & dust.” The children are to have their halibut oil pills and she directs them to “try to have a vegetable for supper on school nights.” Cabbage should be eaten at least twice; “they won’t keep and should be used.” She wants the plants watered, especially the

⁵⁰⁰ Blood clots can form after surgery as part of the healing process, but if they don’t dissolve and they break off, they can travel to the deep veins where they can lodge near the heart and lungs and be fatal. This is called a pulmonary embolism. *Deep vein thrombosis*. Found 8/6/21 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deep_vein_thrombosis.



Please change Gordon's & Leonard's beds about Wed. or Thursday, clean sheet on ours the day I am to come home.
Please send my heavy green sweater if it is a ^(10 above or lower) cold day when I come home.
The Christmas cactus is going to bloom. Keep it a little dry rather than too damp.
Rosemary can wear red overalls, new yellow shirt, on Sunday.
Watch Rosemary when the washer is going. Don't let her get up on a chair near the wringer.
Eat the olives in the refrigerator.
If you have to bake bread, make 3 loaves, use recipe in

The note Susan Hewson left before going into the hospital in November 1949. She would not come home again, as she would tragically die on November 3 at age thirty-nine.

“begonia, fern, ivy, maple” and the cactus as needed, using “discretion.” Here is the rest of her pragmatic two-page note, which makes clear that she does not know she won’t return from the hospital:

“Wet the boys’ shirt cuffs, rub with laundry soap when putting them in the washer.

Some of Rosemary’s clothes in top drawer of large bureau.

If Robin takes measles, put him in front room. Mr. Smith upstairs in his bed.

Please change Gordon’s & Leonard’s beds about Wed. or Thursday, clean sheet on ours the day I am to come home.

Please send my heavy green sweater if it is a (10 above or lower) cold day when I come home.

The Christmas cactus is going to bloom. Keep it a little dry rather than too damp.

Rosemary can wear red overalls, new yellow shirt, on Sunday.

Watch Rosemary when the washer is going. Don’t let her get up on a chair near the wringer.

Eat the olives in the refrigerator.

If you have to bake bread, make 3 loaves, use recipe in leaflet in file. Raisin bread recipe in Crisco pamphlet in drawer.

Rosemary doesn't wear her snow suit when it's muddy.
 Leonard's drawers on the kitchen lines.
 Rosie's clean sleepers need buttons.
 Keep Mother's door shut as Rosemary gets at bureau.
 Send Rosemary to bed after dinner with a Lifesaver⁵⁰¹ from Mother's bureau.
 Put Gracy out just before or around dinner time."⁵⁰²

On November 2 in the early evening, Geoff is called to Susan's bedside where he remains until she passes away early the next morning. During that time, she is able to communicate to her husband some of her wishes, including her desire to be buried at the "little stone church," St. Paul's Anglican Church⁵⁰³ that serves Kennedy and Langbank.



The "Little Stone Church" where Susan Hewson asked to be buried.

501 Lifesavers hard candy were invented by Clarence Crane of Garrettsville, Ohio in 1912 as a "summer candy" that could withstand heat better than chocolate. Its name was taken from the style of life preserver also called a "lifesaver," from which its ring shape was designed. For more: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life_Savers.

502 Note. Hewson, Susan. Unaddressed, undated. October-November 1949. "Gracy" was the family's gigantic and memorable cat. Named not for his gender—Gracy was a "he"—but for his grey colour.

503 St. Paul's Anglican Church, one mile south of Langbank on Highway #9, was constructed in 1938. Charles J. Parker, a stonemason originally from Ontario, and his son Harold directed the local churchgoers construction crew. Eleven teams of horses hauled 180 loads of stones and thirty loads of gravel. The Norman design is based on Scottish roots. The tower is complete with crenellation and the front displays a large limestone cross over the door. The rear of the church features an apse. The graveyard has the gravestone of Charles Parker with the inscription, "A Man of Faith who Laboured with Stone."

Susan Hewson leaves her husband and seven children, ranging in age from seventeen to two years, to mourn her sudden passing. Interment is in the beautiful cemetery surrounded by evergreens beside the little stone church.⁵⁰⁴

A family's grief

After Susan's death, Grannie Amy Hewson in England writes her grandchildren a sorrowful letter:

“My dear grandchildren, you know how inexpressibly sorry I am to hear of the shattering blow that has befallen you. We wish we could help you & I long to be younger, but now I am only feeble & practically useless or I would come out to you, tho' I should not have been much help. I know you will all do your utmost to help Daddy upon whom now so much responsibility & sorrow fall.

Auntie Bar was away when Auntie Sadie's letter went to their house, so she did not get it until 3 days late—you have many kind friends I am sure & Auntie Sadie is always so kind. Grannie & Grandpapa Dickey must be very sad & all the Aunties—we do feel so sorry for all of you we know you will all try to do as your loved Mother would wish—with my dear love to you all, Your loving, Grannie Hewson.”⁵⁰⁵

Susan had been a dedicated and energetic wife and mother, and her children were her legacy. She would have been proud of their resilience and the way they soldiered on, though the pain of losing their mother would leave an imprint on them.

Robin Hewson recalls how he learned of his mother's death: “I was seven years old when my mother died. I remember the milk cow just had a calf. I went out with Leonard to see it and that's when our father told us.”⁵⁰⁶

Leonard, eight years old at the time, remembers: “I was sitting by the wood box in the kitchen and Daddy came home. Amaret must've been at school at Langbank. Barbara and Thomas—the rest of us were all here.”⁵⁰⁷

504 *Susan Hewson Obituary 1949* & *Geoffrey Mark Hewson Eulogy 2005*.

505 Letter. Amy Hewson to her Hewson grandchildren. November 18, 1949. P. 1-2.

506 Interview with Robin Hewson. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.

507 Interview with Leonard Hewson. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.

Thomas, who was eleven years old when his mother died, recalls, “It was naturally traumatic for us all. But my father made the best of it. Family sticks together.”⁵⁰⁸

It’s sad that the youngest four children, all eight years old and under, were to have little to no memory of their mother in later years.

Leonard says he remembers Frances and Roland “about as much as my mother,” given their role in his early caretaking when his infant brother Robin was ill, and Susan had to focus most of her time on him. Heather, just four years old then, would retain very few direct memories of her mother, and Rosemary who was only two, has no memories of her except through pictures but remembers how her “six older siblings took over and cushioned the way for her.”⁵⁰⁹

Heather shares a few sketches of her mother:

“I was very little, and we were in Mr. Millers furniture store. There was a china cat almost as big as me, and I decided to take it home. At one point on the drive back home, Mother turned around and said, ‘Oh, she’s got the cat!’ so we had to turn around and take the cat back to Mr. Miller’s.”

And...

“...Robin and I were hammering in the basement. He told me to hold something that he was going to hit, but he hit my finger instead. I remember Mother bandaging my finger and sitting with me in the rocking chair.”⁵¹⁰

Immediately after Susan’s death, her sisters Amy and Elizabeth pitch in to help with the children, for which Geoff is grateful. He writes to his in-laws who have been unable to join him and the children at Christmas: “Elizabeth has been a great help and has made it very much better for us all...I am very fortunate in having such sisters.”⁵¹¹

Still, the grief is too much for Geoff to bear without a break. Early in the new year of 1950, two months after Susan’s death, he is close to a breakdown and makes a trip to England to visit family and old friends. He leaves the children in the capable care of housekeeper Freda Hazard of Kennedy, who had moved in around Christmas.⁵¹² She will become an important influence in the lives of the Hewson children.

508 Interview with Thomas Hewson. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.

509 Interview with Rosemary (Hewson) Cowan & Heather (Hewson) Gosselin. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.

510 Interview with Heather (Hewson) Gosselin. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.

511 Letter. Geoff Hewson to Janet & John Dickey. December 26, 1949.

512 Interview with Heather (Hewson) Gosselin. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: A serious-looking young Robin Hewson, with his dog Flossie, at the Hewson farm. 1950.

The Hewson girls. Back: Amaret & Barbara. Front: Rosemary & Heather. 1950.

The Hewson boys. Leonard, Thomas and Robin, holding Gracy the cat. 1950.



One Dickey bird is missing. Janet Dickey & her daughters, fifteen years after Susan's death. L to R: Amy, Janet Jr., Janet Sr., Elizabeth & Sadie. 1964.

Geoff heals with family and travel

While the children are being carefully tended, Geoff takes the time he needs to do his own curative work: visiting his family and friends in England.

His trip to London is Geoff's first on an airplane, which he describes as "noisy and rough." But he feels that the airplane is "the way to go now."⁵¹³ He tells his children of encountering some women on the flight, to whom he speaks his mind: "On the plane several of the ladies smoked. One offered me one. I told her I had too much sense to smoke. She agreed it was silly to smoke."⁵¹⁴

Norman and Jeanne Turvey pick Geoff up from the airport and drive him around London, giving him a whirlwind tour of the Tower of London and the guards outside Windsor palace.

Geoff's gregarious nature and love of travel are evident in letters he sends to his children. On the train, he talks to people the entire trip from London to Meols:

"I was first talking to a man & his wife from N. Wales. They used to live in Liverpool. They had just spent a week in London on their silver honeymoon. They seemed so friendly I gave them a tin of condensed milk. They were very pleased with it."⁵¹⁵

513 Letter. Geoff Hewson to the Hewson children. Mid-January 1950.

514 Letter. Geoff Hewson to the Hewson children. January 1950. P.3.

515 *ibid.*

He then takes the train from London to Liverpool and then on to Meols, where he is picked up by sister Barbara and her husband Harold, who take him to his mother Amy's house. He visits with her, and his Aunties, May and Edith, who are eighty-six and eighty-two respectively, and still living independently.

He and Barbara visit Hoylake, and then with Harold joining them, travel to Yorkshire, to the farm where "granny stayed during the war": "The people there were all very friendly and gave us eggs bacon ham and cream. On one farm they had first killed a great big pig we got some liver also."⁵¹⁶

He visits a "great many friends" also and comments on Barbara's daughter Elizabeth, who appears to be a social butterfly: "Elizabeth is a great one for going out to see her friends of which she seem to have a great many. She is apt not to do her homework."⁵¹⁷



Geoff Hewson visits the Mills family at Meols in 1950. Front, L to R:
Elizabeth & Geoffrey Mills. Back: Harold & Barbara Mills.

516 Letter. Geoff Hewson to the Hewson children. January 27, 1950. P.1.

517 *ibid.*

Chapter 28

A Community of Families

WHEN HE RETURNS HOME, Geoff is strengthened and ready to get back to his focus on family and community. Now he and his children must learn the terrible lesson that even when the unthinkable happens, life goes on.

Other people fill in the jobs that used to be Susan's. Housekeeper Freda Hazard becomes the first housekeeper. The job is extremely challenging with the babies, Heather and Rosemary, and three almost adolescent boys, but the hard-working Freda does her very best to run the household. She is something of a mother figure for Heather and Rosemary (Heather recalls even making a Mother's Day card for her) and an authority figure for the boys:

“The first Christmas after Mother died, Amy and Elizabeth stayed here. Freda came after Christmas that year and remained for six years. After she left Barbara was home for a time, before going to teach in Kelso. Amaret came then until October 1957 when she got married. Mrs. Osborne came after that until I was in Grade 8. Then Barbara was here a year again after which she taught in Wapella.”⁵¹⁸



The Hewson family without Susan. Back, L to R: Amaret, Geoff, Barbara. Front L to R: Robin, Leonard, Heather, Rosemary and Thomas. Early 1950s.

In addition to excellent housekeepers like Freda Hazard and Mrs. Osborne, and the elder children, the family is assisted by loving family. Aunt Sadie and Uncle Harold Cox try to help and sometimes ask Leonard and Robin to stay over with Donald. On one such wintertime occasion when Donald is about six, the boys spend the morning playing outside. When Donald comes into the house, his mother asks him the whereabouts of Leonard and Robin, to which he replies “oh, they’ve walked home.”

Cousins Owen and Hilda Cairns also make a point of including the family: “They liked to go to dances at the lake and they would sometimes take Barbara and I with them,” Amaret says. “They were very good to me.” Heather adds, “They were very good to all of us. Hilda would often invite the whole family for supper, which was eight extra people to feed, and find a chair for!”⁵¹⁹

And Granny Dickey continues to be an important help and influence as Heather describes:

“Granny Dickey was Geoff’s ‘go-to’ in child-raising matters and other areas. She once told me when I was in high school that soon after my mother’s death she was visited by my mother, who spoke to her, saying very clearly, ‘Don’t worry. They [the children] will be all right.’ ‘And,’ said Granny to me, ‘you are.’”⁵²⁰

519 *ibid.*

520 *Ibid.*

Next generation, same school

All those children needed education, and Woodside School is still a prominent location in the lives of the families. Though cars are more common now, Dickey, Hewson and Cox kids still often ride horseback to school. Thomas Hewson recalls:

“We used to take the team and sleigh and stop there [at the Dickey’s]. Then we’d walk the last mile and a half to school. If we rode the horses, we’d be two on a horse.”⁵²¹

On the occasions the sleigh is taken, the oldest drives the team. They work out a win-win system with the neighbour boys, according to Leonard:

“Amaret would drive to the Wees house—then the Wees boys would drive to get a free ride. The Weeses would put the horses in the barn and bring them out after school and drive as far as their place. Then Amaret, Barbara or Thomas would take over to drive home.”⁵²²

The Hewson children first attend Woodside School and then later, Langbank:

“Amaret and Barbara both went to high school in the two-room school at Langbank. Amaret boarded with Mrs. Barnett. Barbara boarded with Granny Dickey who had moved to Langbank in 1949. I think they did Grades 9-10 in Woodside and Grades 11-12 in Langbank, probably by correspondence like I did. I took correspondence for 9 and 10 in Woodside. Mrs. Hitchcock used to sort of supervise it. But I had to send lessons into Regina every week or so.”⁵²³

The Dickeys had moved into Langbank in the fall before Susan’s death and so their home again became a school hub:

“Granny’s house was very close to the school, and Granny would have all her grandchildren, the Coxes and the Hewsons, come to lunch once a week. The boys went one day and the girls another. What a luxury it was to not have to make lunches those days!”⁵²⁴

521 *ibid.*

522 Interview with Leonard Hewson. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.

523 Email. Thomas Hewson to Margaret Hewson. October 23, 2021.

524 Interview with Heather (Hewson) Gosselin. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.



FROM TOP: Woodside school kids in 1946. Back row, second: Amaret Hewson. Second row; second from left, Thomas Hewson; second from right, Barbara Hewson. Front row; far right, Leonard Hewson. Courtesy *Langbank Memories*. P. 307.



Interior of Woodside school after it is rebuilt in 1947.

Off to school on Ginger, Prince & Goldie. Hewson siblings. Late 1940s.



Thomas recalls Mrs. McKillop, who at the time was the high school teacher:

“She tended to give us reading assignments and we used to go up to the board to write answers to questions. I had to take home economics as she would not teach physics. Mrs. McKillop tended to think about exams in how she taught. There were four of us in Grade 11 and two of us in Grade 12.”⁵²⁵

Leonard is a mischievous boy. When asked in his elder years what his favorite thing about school was, he can’t name one. However, he does recall a story about how he once got out of trouble:

“One day I accidentally put a bat through the blackboard at Langbank. There was only one teacher and when she went home for lunch, we were left to our own devices. Before she left, she said, ‘Today I want you all to be playing ball when I come back.’ Well, there was a bat and ball on her desk, and I picked up the bat and went to swing at the ball, and I put a hole in the blackboard. I thought I was in big trouble. When she came back, she didn’t see the hole at first, and said, ‘Leonard—wipe off the blackboard.’ Well, I knocked the brush on the floor, and I fell on the floor. She came running. ‘Have you hurt yourself?’ I said, ‘I guess I put my elbow through the blackboard!’ ‘How could you do such a thing?’ she said. Not another word was said about it between me and the teacher.”⁵²⁶

Rosemary also recalls trouble at school, but unlike her brother, she didn’t get out of it—she got into it:

“I wore high felt boots that were laced up and they took a long time to lace up after school. The boys would get so mad at me for taking so long, that one day I thought I might duck out just before the class sang *God Save the Queen* at the end of the day to get a head start. But the teacher caught me in the coat closet. She made me take them off and come back and sing the song by myself.”⁵²⁷

Rosemary also remembers that when the schoolchildren are thirsty, they all drink from a single cream can of water, sharing the same dipper.

525 Interview with Tom Hewson. Hewson, Margaret. 2021.

526 Interview with Leonard Hewson. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.

527 Interview with Rosemary (Hewson) Cowan & Heather (Hewson) Gosselin. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.

Robin remembers that for his first year of high school, he and Leonard drive to school in Langbank, and by his second year beginning in 1960, all the country schools are closed, and students are thereafter bussed to the newly constructed school in Langbank.⁵²⁸ It is the first time that the students will have more than one teacher in high school. Heather and Rosemary take the bus to high school in Langbank.

Pastimes & holidays

The children fall naturally into three relationship units according to their approximate ages and genders, and their primary sibling relationships are with the others in their group: the two eldest girls, Amaret and Barbara, are close. Leonard, Tom and Robin are a group, and Heather and Rosemary are another unit.

The two youngest do everything together and remain very close all their lives: “We lived our lives in parallel. It was never one or the other of us, it was always ‘Heather and Rosemary,’ Heather says.⁵²⁹ The pair live together while attending university in Saskatoon and the first two years teaching in Regina, prior to Rosemary’s marriage. In future years they remain in close contact, no matter how far apart they are.

Geoff keeps busy on the farm and his youngest two children, the unit known as “Heather and Rosemary,” follow him around the yard, listening to his stories and learning as they go. He would call them his “midden-pickers.” Heather was twenty-five before she realized the word wasn’t “mitten,” and that it was an English term that meant people who went to garbage grounds to pick out of the garbage.⁵³⁰

The girls go for walks with their father in the evening to check on the crops and cows. They help feed the cattle, and water them at the old well. In wintertime, special treats are to ride on the hayrack on a Saturday morning and go skating on the slough. But there is work to do first, as Rosemary describes: “We had to clean off the ice on the slough so we could skate. We would be so exhausted that we’d wait until the next day to skate...and then it had snowed again!”⁵³¹

528 *Schools. Langbank Memories*. 1984. P. 31. The country schools that closed were Brookside, Woodside, Montgomery, Golden Plain and Sunnymead.

529 Interview with Heather (Hewson) Gosselin & Rosemary (Hewson) Cowan. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.

530 *ibid.*

531 *ibid.*



Rosemary (L) & Heather (R) loved spending time with their father Geoff. Early 1950s.

The girls also have a pair of colorful imaginary friends to entertain them—Bad Diane and Bad Dick: “We would both see them. Once one of us said, ‘The wagon just ran over Bad Diane,’ and the other said, ‘But she came back to life!’”⁵³²

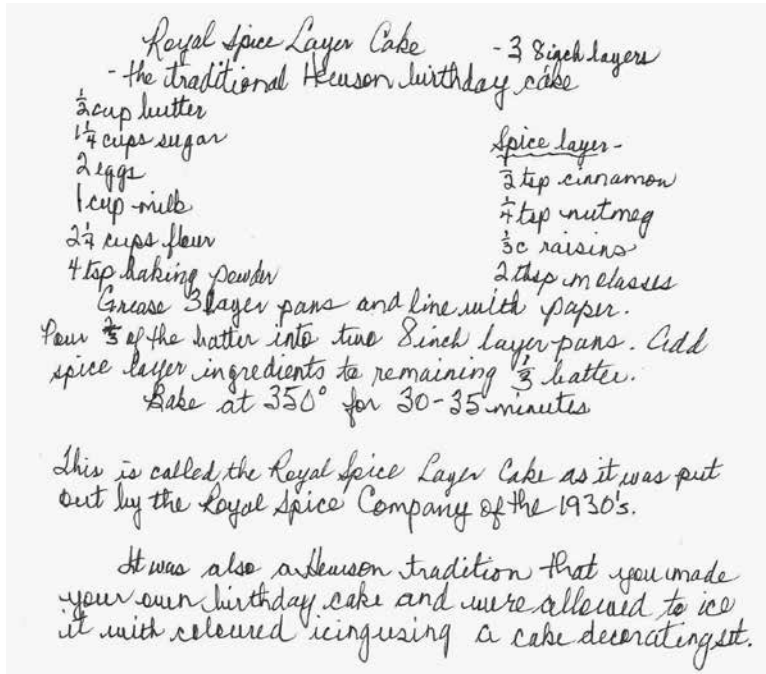
Birthdays are special occasions, not because of gifts (there aren’t many to speak of), but because of the family’s several customs surrounding the birthday cake:

“We had a tradition that you made your own birthday cake using the traditional birthday cake recipe, the Royal Spice Layer Cake, written in the cookbook in Mother’s writing. It was two white layers and one layer of spice. The best part was the icing. You could make (almost) as much as you wanted, but the *pièce de résistance* was the cake decorator set. You could make the icing any colour you wished, and you could pipe the icing or make fancy decorations, like rosebuds. The icing was always very thick! Then the cake was served on a special green Depression glass birthday plate.”⁵³³

Christmas is also special, of course. The biggest outing of the year for the whole area was the Christmas school concert. Rosemary remembers an unfortunate performance of hers one year:

532 *ibid.*

533 Interview with Rosemary (Hewson) Cowan & Heather (Hewson) Gosselin. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.



The family recipe for Royal Spice Layer Cake written out by Heather (Hewson) Gosselin.

“Heather had a beautiful voice, and I thought, ‘oh here’s my chance!’ I can’t remember the name of the song, but it was awful, and afterwards Robin said, ‘it sounded rather like when someone steps on the cat’s tail,’ and I was deflated.”⁵³⁴

One year, the two youngest Hewson children are ready for Christmas morning in the middle of the night, as Heather recalls:

“I remember one time when I was nine and Rosemary was seven, we were so excited on Christmas Eve that we kept waking up through the night and putting on more clothes. The first time we put on our shirts, then our pants, then shoes...by morning we were completely dressed. I don’t know why we were in such a hurry to get up; we couldn’t open any presents until the chores were done.”⁵³⁵

534 *ibid.*

535 *ibid.*

Heather also remembers dances, sliding down the hill and going to sleepovers with her friend Wilma Jean. She plays the organ at church and sings in the choir. She also loves animals, any kittens or puppies, and once, a pail-fed calf. And when her father embarrasses her into it, she will sing one of his favourite songs for him, *Whispering Hope*. She would sing it again, decades later, at her father's one hundredth birthday party, and then at his funeral.

“When I was a small child, this was a song that my dad was very fond of and was probably one of the first songs I sang in public. It used to embarrass me horribly when people would come to visit and my dad would say, ‘Alright now, Heather you sing, and Barbara will play. Sing *Whispering Hope*.’ So I’m singing it again.”⁵³⁶

The family sometimes go into Whitewood on the weekends, where they can find all kinds of fun:

“There were so many of us we couldn’t all fit in the car. We’d go on Saturday afternoon and be free to go around and do whatever we wanted to. One time Leonard placed a copper penny on the rail line just before the train came through.”⁵³⁷

The older daughters, Amaret and Barbara, are in their late teens and have many boyfriends who find their way to the Hewson farm in search of them. This activity is a great source of interest to all the younger siblings. An extra young man often appears at the dinner table and is highly scrutinized by the family, sometimes favorably and sometimes not. Geoff’s reaction is sometimes a snort, and that young man does not reappear. Amaret and Barbara are close to leaving home and it is expected they will get further education. After Amaret and Barbara leave, they often return for a weekend, which is a big event for the rest of the family. Sometimes they bring friends with them, and Amaret often bakes special things while Barbara goes outside with the younger family. Rosemary remembers one occasion:

“Barbara and I went skating and we were putting on our skates in the car and were just looking up when Leonard rode Diamond, the big white horse, abreast of the window. All Barbara could see was the white chest

536 Video. Geoff Hewson's 100th Birthday Party, December 31, 2002.

537 Interview with Heather (Hewson) Gosselin. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.



Barbara & Amaret Hewson. 1950s.

of the horse and she flung herself backwards on the seat shouting, ‘HOLY COW! A POLAR BEAR.’⁵³⁸

Amaret and Barbara often attend a local dance, meaning a sleep-in the next morning, much to the disappointment of Heather and Rosemary who are longing to spend time with their older sisters.

The boys go hunting & trapping

Hunting and trapping are still preferred recreation activities for boys, in all seasons. Geoff has always been a dedicated trapper and hunter of fur-bearing animals, and he instills a similar love in his sons. This turns into an important pastime for the boys after their mother’s passing.

Tom recalls:

“As a boy, we had gopher traps around the yard and I cannot remember my first experience with them. There were striped gophers, brown gophers, gray ground squirrels and pocket gophers commonly called moles.”⁵³⁹

538 Interview with Rosemary (Hewson) Cowan. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.

539 *Story #14 Hunting Small Game. Tom Hewson Stories.* Hewson, Thomas. 2020.

At that time, moles have been such a nuisance in the hay fields that Geoff and Susan pay their children five cents apiece for catching them. Here's how the trapping was done:

“The procedure was to locate the tunnel near a fresh mound, scrape the earth away in order to set the trap in the bottom of the tunnel and then cover it all with a piece of board and earth so as to exclude the light.

“Pocket gophers are more active at night so we would check our traps in the morning. Sometimes the gopher would abandon the tunnel. Other times the gopher would push some earth in front of him and cover the trap without getting caught. About one time in four, there would be a gopher in the trap, most often dead. The family dogs did not like to eat other gophers but regarded pocket gophers as a delicacy. Once in a while we would catch a black melano or white albino.”⁵⁴⁰

Coyotes, weasels, muskrat, and jack rabbit skins are common in the basement of the Hewson house. Skunk skins, however, are banished to the chicken house where the hens pick the fat off them. Occasionally this results in tainted eggs, but there is little egg production during the winter.

Skunks are worth several dollars at times during the 1940s. Tom remembers:

“There was an old shack beside the trail to one of our farther away fields and I remember when there was a trap set there for skunks. Our hired man was walking home from the field in late fall and found a badger in the trap. Badger skins are not prime until later on in the winter. The hired man was resourceful. He took the leather laces out of his high top boots, found a stick which the live badger clamped onto and then tied the laces around the badgers mouth and feet. He then carried the badger home and they kept it in an old teller's cage that my father had bought from a discontinued bank. They ended up not getting much money for it, but you can't say they didn't try.”⁵⁴¹

By the time Tom and his brothers start trapping around 1950, skunks and jack rabbit skins are no longer worth bothering with, while coyote and badger are seldom worth the trouble. But weasels, muskrats and red squirrel are:

540 *ibid.*

541 *ibid.*

Sept 8 Opening day of duck
season. I shot one teal on
Frank's place
Sept 10 Teacher's institute. I shot two
ducks in the morning. Two
mallards on sewer. One
drake, one hen
Sept 11. Shot one mallard drake on 17
in slough by trail over to Cairness
Sept 14 I shot three mallards with
one shot in the morning.
In afternoon in Daddy shot
two and I shot one, all on
wing. Two drakes, one

In 1952, at age fourteen, Thomas started a journal to track his hunting activities, cataloguing how many of which animals were killed and where he found them, sometimes including maps he drew of the locations. On this particular page covering September 1952, he is talking about ducks, one of the many species of animal hunted on the prairies. Thomas kept this journal for many years, which also included information on crops planted from 1954-62, and one page of curling game scores from six days in March 1953. Teams he played on included brother Leonard and his uncle Harold Cox. He took first and second once each but lost 10-5 to Richard Gravener (Fred's son) on March 16.

“We used to ride bareback three miles to a country school and had traps set along the way as well as a couple of other routes away from the yard. I can remember the first muskrat, weasel, mink, badger and beaver in traps that I had set.”⁵⁴²

Traps are set for weasels around the first week of November. A piece of bush rabbit or some other bait is secured in a willow bush or a stone pile, and one or two traps are set in the pathway to the bait. Magpies are a nuisance as they often got caught. Red squirrels are also often caught. More rarely, there is a skunk or feral cat—neither of which are wanted. But sometimes they get a very lucky surprise:

542 *ibid.*

“One morning on the way to school there was a larger animal in one of the traps. We were delighted to find that it was a mink rather than a feral cat as we had feared. Its skin brought \$40.00, a sizeable amount in those days, and it proved to be the first of many in the next few years. Weasels brought about \$2.00 muskrat \$1.50 and squirrels 40 cents at that time.”⁵⁴³

The muskrat population is low, as the area has a lot of land-locked sloughs that only fill up during wetter years, providing a suitable habitat for muskrat. Tom explains how muskrat were regulated:

“The Saskatchewan government required you to apply for a special license and you had to show how many muskrat were thought to be living in that area. You were issued a quota and had to sell them through the Saskatchewan Fur Marketing Service.”⁵⁴⁴

Like their father who enjoyed being out alone hunting and trapping, the Hewson boys came to love it as well, and not just to make a little money. Robin recalls how he enjoyed “shooting gophers on a Sunday with an occasional bottle of beer.”⁵⁴⁵

And, though it may not be her first choice of a pastime, even Rosemary learns how to trap, out of necessity: before Geoff will take Rosemary on a shopping to Regina, she must trap a certain number of gophers. Rosemary subsequently also becomes a proficient trapper.⁵⁴⁶

543 *ibid.*

544 *ibid.*

545 Interview with Robin & Dorothy (Sweet) Hewson. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.

546 *ibid.*

Chapter 29

Decade of Plenty, & of Loss

IN ADDITION TO BEING THE CENTRAL DECADE OF THE BABY BOOM, the 1950s in Canada are years of economic stability and prosperity. Prices stabilize and overseas trade grows steadily, seeing more money flow into the farming community. Farmers witness revolutionary advances in agricultural technology. Mechanization—which Tom Hewson will say was the biggest change of his farming career—takes over, making it possible for farms to become bigger. New machinery, seeds, pesticides, and fertilizers result in greater efficiencies and productivity.

The fastest growing part of the economy becomes the service sector, including many professional and office positions, also known as white-collar jobs. They tend to pay higher salaries than the blue-collar jobs of the industrial trades. And, in 1957, the introduction of national hospital insurance improves the situation for those who can't afford the increasingly higher costs of medical care.⁵⁴⁷

The past half-century of pioneering westward while maintaining the connection with the family in England has knitted together five families from two continents in the Waters lines. These ties, along with assorted friends and

547 1952-1967 *Reducing Poverty*. Canadian Museum of History. Found 10/12/21 at https://www.historymuseum.ca/cmc/exhibitions/hist/pensions/cpp-a52-dl_e.html.



Ladies on the Cairnbank porch. Sitting, back row: Amy Dickey & Elsie Cairns. Rosemary Hewson is perched up high. Sitting, front row: Janet Dickey & Barbara Hewson. August 1959.



Generations of ladies. Heather Hewson, Amaret Smyth, Janet Cox, Janet Dickey, Sadie Cox, Elsie Cairns, Edith Waters (visiting from Philadelphia). Front, giggling in pleated skirt: Roberta Cox. 1960.

neighbours, have steadily built a strong support system that helps them all weather economic downturns, extreme weather, war and even death.

The 1950s will also see the changing of the guard in the Cairns and Dickey families, as the previous generation leaves the stage, and the young folks assumes their new adult roles.

Uncle Bob & Aunt Elsie are mentors

In the 1950s, the Cairns, Cox and Hewson families are farming apart, but they come together often, gathering for holidays and other special occasions. Though they never have children, Bob and Elsie are close to their nieces and nephews, supporting them both in word and deed.

Bob works with his nephew Owen daily, with whom he had gone into a farm partnership in 1947, and he continues to help and advise Geoff and Harold, the husbands of his two nieces, Susan and Sadie. While the three families still seed and till separately, they work cooperatively together at harvest for many years.

Tom is quite influenced by his Great-Uncle Bob Cairns:

“I remember as a child taking lunch out to the field and the men standing around having an after-lunch smoke and Bob saying, ‘Come on boys, you’re holding up production!’ Bob was progressive, when others stuck with horses he went to tractors and combines and more advanced methods.”⁵⁴⁸



Harvest 1955. Bob Cairns (center) with great-nephew Tom Hewson (left) and visiting cousin/sister-in-law Ede Waters (right) in front of the combine, a Massey-Harris 90 jointly owned by the Cairns, Hewson & Cox families. This would be Tom’s first season running a combine. September, 1955.

548 Interview with Thomas Hewson. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.



CLOCKWITH FROM TOP LEFT: . Elsie Cairns on the hammock on the Cairnbank porch. August 1961.

Owen Cairns shows his strength holding daughter Judy aloft with one hand, and she shows her balance and showmanship. 1950.

Elsie Cairns is a cultural mentor to many young people around Cairnbank. Here she accompanies Heather Hewson (singing, far right) at the piano. L to R: Dorothy & Judy Cairns, Rosemary Hewson. Late 1950s.

Bob & Elsie (left) check out the crop while great niece and nephew Judy & Jim Cairns look on. 1953-55.

The Cairnbank home that Bob and Elsie built in the 1930s has become a favorite venue for Christmas dinner. In 1952 and 1953 the house is full of adults and children, and the aromas of traditional dishes. Heather (Hewson) Gosselin recalls how the children enjoyed the house: “I remember Christmas at her house...they had two sets of staircases, and we loved to go up one and down the other.”⁵⁴⁹



Christmas 1953 is celebrated at Cairnbank. Back Row, L to R: Amaret Hewson, Amy Dickey, Harold & Sadie Cox, Geoff & Barbara Hewson. Middle Row, L to R: Janet Cox, Bob & Elsie Cairns, Janet & John Dickey, Thomas Hewson. Front Row, L to R: Leonard (with bow tie), Robin, Rosemary & Heather Hewson, and Roberta & Donald Cox. December 1953.

Elsie has many hobbies, in addition to her love of family. She loves cooking and brings forward many old family recipes, especially desserts. The recipe from the magazine article, *The Captains Plum Pudding*, originates with her.⁵⁵⁰ She has a fudge recipe that has since been made famous in the family by Rosemary (Hewson) Cowan.

Owen and Hilda’s three children, Jim, Judy, and Dorothy, who live in the same yard as their Great-Aunt Elsie, serve as creative muses to her. She is a

549 Interview with Rosemary (Hewson) Cowan & Heather (Hewson) Gosselin. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.
550 *Captain's Plum Pudding*. Morant, Daisy. *Canada Century Home*. December-January 1987.

photography buff and loves taking pictures of them, especially the first born “Jimmie,” which she places in annotated photo albums.

Elsie also loves music and is a great influence on her niece Heather: “Aunt Elsie was quite a force. I did so much music. When she died, she left me her organ.” Elsie’s interest in helping young musicians extends beyond her own family; she is a “mover and a shaker” supporting the arts in the Langbank area. Elsie encourages young musicians, sometimes even giving them financial aid, and she purchases an electric organ for the Langbank United Church.⁵⁵¹

She brings style and good taste from New England to the prairies, in more ways than one. Her house is beautifully decorated with a style that is ahead of its time on the prairies. She brings many recipes with her that are new to the area and become family favourites that are still in use.⁵⁵²

Elsie loves cats and one special one will help her with her grief and loneliness when she loses her beloved husband Bob. On August 10, 1956, Bob Cairns dies at age sixty-one from a sudden heart attack. Shortly after Bob’s death, Geoff Hewson is milking the cow one morning when a small black kitten climbs up on his back. He thinks Elsie might like a pet, so he takes the kitten to her that very morning. She names him Blackie and she will have the cat for company until her own death on May 14, 1966.⁵⁵³

A ‘most unselfish man’

Bob Cairns had known that he suffered from hardening of the arteries, and had researched his condition, but ultimately could not survive it.

He had spent his life as a great custodian of his community, serving as a member of the Council of Silverwood R.M. for two years and as an elder of the Langbank United Church. He taught Bible class at Sunday school for many years and took an active part in charitable and community life. His childhood pioneer experience was documented in three of the Saskatchewan Archives Questionnaires about Pioneer Experiences which were intended for people who lived in Western Canada before 1914.

551 Interview with Heather (Hewson) Gosselin. Hewson, Margaret. 2021.

552 *ibid.*

553 Interview with Heather (Hewson) Gosselin. Hewson, Margaret. 2021.



Bob Cairns at Cairnbank. 1955.

An excerpt from his obituary describes him this way:

“A cousin said of him, ‘He was the most unselfish man I ever knew,’ and this would be echoed by many...He believed in stewardship and no one going to him for help came away empty handed. He will surely be missed.”⁵⁵⁴

That strong sense of stewardship of community and family is instilled by Bob in his nieces and nephews. This includes Owen, who takes over management of Cairnbank after Bob’s death, and the many other family members who will also live and farm in the Langbank area.

Janet and the Dickey birds lose John

Time marches on at Lawkland Farm too, as near the end of the decade, eighty-seven-year-old John Dickey also dies, on February 24, 1958. He is buried at the Kennedy Cemetery.

The former postmaster and his wife had made a good life for themselves and their brood of girls. John had been a wonderful father—the kind of father who

554 R.B. Cairns, *Prominent Farmer Passes Suddenly*. Unidentified newspaper clipping, 1956.



Janet & John Dickey with their dog Mollie on front steps of the house at Lawkland Farm. Undated.

in the sleigh on the late-night ride home from the school Christmas concert pointed out the constellations, who rhymed off all the names of the *Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe* poem to help the girls come up with yet another name for their dolls. He was a father with “very sharp eyes” who found fascinating things around the farm, such as a small square cut piece of grey marble that he was “quite sure” had come out of Noah’s Ark; or who, while drawing water for the stock from the well would spy the first buttercup and pick it to show the girls that they were in bloom.

John Dickey had a theory that when the land was previously occupied by “Indian people,” they had used part of Lawkland Farm as a factory for making weapons and tools. When he worked in the North Field, he often found flint arrowheads, spear heads, hammer heads and scrapers; he collected these artifacts and brought them out to show interested visitors.⁵⁵⁵

Along with Janet’s interest in botany, reading, and all the domestic arts, Mr. and Mrs. Dickey were not just good parents, but excellent teachers for their Dickey birds. John disciplined the girls with compassion, patience, and humour, rarely raising his voice. If he said even one cross word to them, which he seldom did, it was twice as effective as a word from their mother.⁵⁵⁶

555 *5 Little Dickey Birds*. Reynolds, Amaret. November 1985.

556 *ibid.* December 1987.

The Dickey birds all grown up

Janet Dickey, Jr., the second oldest Dickey bird, moves to Vancouver in 1951, where she takes a business course then works for a manufacturing and repair plant and several civic departments. She eventually purchases her own older home, which she improves and fills with furniture she makes herself. She advances to work at the Stanley Park office of the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation and retires in 1971. Janet never marries but is actively involved in many sports such as skating, bowling, golf, badminton and hiking. At fifty-five, she buys a car and learns to drive in Vancouver. She is fond of children and animals and is a primary Sunday school teacher or superintendent for fourteen years in the United Church. She belongs to many organizations, some of which she holds executive positions in.⁵⁵⁷

Prior to her marriage, Sadie Cox, the third oldest Dickey bird, had provided support to extended family members; supporting her grandparents in their final years and assisting her elder sister Susan with her family responsibilities and cooking for the threshing crew at harvest time.



LEFT: Janet Dickey Jr. poses, wearing a suit and heels, with a bag of golf clubs. 1950s.

RIGHT: Sadie's life revolves around her family and community. Back row: John Dickey, Janet Cox, Janet Dickey, Donald Cox. Front row: Sadie, Harold Cox, Roberta Cox, & Sadie's sister Elizabeth Dickey. 1950s.

⁵⁵⁷ Janet Cairns Dickey. *Langbank Memories*. Dickey, Janet. 1984. P. 315-16.

After marriage, she remains firmly ensconced in farm, family, community and married life with Harold. By 1950, they have three children—Janet, Donald and baby Roberta. Sadie is active as a leader in the Langbank Silver Nine 4-H Club and is a member of Poplar Grove United Church where she teaches Sunday School and is assistant organist. She continues these duties later at Langbank United Church, after the amalgamation of the two churches.⁵⁵⁸

In 1956, Amy Dickey, fourth oldest Dickey bird, who has been training other seed analysts at the Plant Pathology Lab at the University of Saskatchewan, is promoted to Supervising Analyst in the Calgary lab. While there she attempts to have the Thomas Waters Jr. letters published. In 1958, the job is relocated to a new federal building in Edmonton. Amy marries Walter Reynolds in February 1962. She continues her work, also writing a textbook for beginners in seed analysis. Poor health eventually forces her to take early retirement at which point Amy and Walter move back to Whitewood, though Amy continues to lead a busy life in the community as a freelance writer and knitting teacher. She also does many handicrafts and assists her husband with his photography hobby.



A stylish Amy making a phone call. Undated.

558 *The Harold Cox Family. Langbank Memories.* Cox, Harold & Sadie. 1984. P. 311-12.



Evans family picture. L to R: Elizabeth, Christina, Bob & Ross. Early 1960s.



Elizabeth with her first-born son Robert "Bob" John, named for both his great-uncle and his grandfathers. 1958.

In 1946, the youngest Dickey bird Elizabeth follows her sisters Janet and Amy to Saskatoon where she enrolls at Success Business College and completes secretarial training.⁵⁵⁹ She begins working at the University School of Agriculture and continues there until the spring of 1957 when she leaves to marry Ross Evans. They have two children, Robert (b. 1958) and Christina (b. 1960).

⁵⁵⁹ Email from Chris Evans to Margaret Hewson. November 5, 2022. Elizabeth's college tuition was paid by her uncle Bob Cairns, who also offered to pay for university tuition, but the only occupations she knew of were teaching and nursing, and she didn't want to do either.

Chapter 30

Hewsons Come of Age

BY THE 1950s, the children are growing up and the farms are evolving. The last hired man, Russel Wees, who had come in the summer of 1953, leaves in 1954, as the boys are now old enough to take over those duties. The three Hewson boys all graduate from high school, do some sort of post-secondary agricultural training, and then are involved in farming.



Geoff and his sons in the late '50s. L to R: Thomas, Robin, Geoff & Leonard. "Duke" the dog gets a scratch on the nose from Tom.

While still in high school, Tom Hewson helps around the farm driving the tractor, raking hay and other jobs he is allowed to handle. Finally, in 1955 he is allowed to work full-time on the farm when he finishes school. It is his first year to run the combine, which, at the time, is jointly owned between the Cox, Cairns, and Hewson families. Tom describes what farming looked like then:

“At that time the usual crop rotation was wheat on summer fallow, varying second crop, usually barley or oats, third summer fallow, mostly for weed control. Fertiliser was becoming standard practice. Some land was in tame grass for hay and pasture. Harvest was all done with 90 Massey Combine.”⁵⁶⁰

By the end of the 1950s, Tom Hewson is working full time on the farm. He becomes involved with Farm Management Clubs and it is through this participation he is recommended to the Ministry of Agriculture to do Farm Management Workshops:

“I spent twelve to fourteen weeks for several winters in the 1960s and 70s teaching these workshops. I had to learn lots and study up. As a teacher I had to learn more than the students knew. This also put me in contact with a lot of people; farm organizations and government people where I learned about new developments, especially the business side of farming.”⁵⁶¹



Thomas swathes oats at the Hewson farm. Early 1960s.

560 *Story #2: Tom Waters Hewson. Tom Hewson Stories.* Hewson, Thomas. 2020. P. 1.

561 Interview with Tom Hewson. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.

Leonard graduates high school in 1959 and receives a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture from the University of Saskatchewan. He works for a time in Kindersley, eventually returning to the family farm. Robin finishes high school in 1961, and like his brothers, has been working part-time on the farm while still in school, chopping wood, picking rocks, and working with the cattle, which he really enjoys. Increases in farm productivity contributed to large world grain surpluses and low grain prices and livestock were a way to use that excess grain. The '60s saw calves being sold in the fall and the herd expanded to more than 200 head by the next decade.

The Hewson women

Though the farming business is still integral to the families, the Hewson women will also take part in the white-collar economy. The first of these is Geoff and Susan's first-born, Amaret, who goes to business college in 1951-2 and then works for a lawyer named Mr. Goodall in Regina for several years. Working in downtown Regina allows Amaret an opportunity to indulge her love of fashion and style. This meticulous work also turns out to be good practice for documenting family history, which Amaret has a great interest in.

“Well my mother and my two grandmothers and my great grandmother had all been teachers and I knew I didn't want to be a teacher, and about the only other thing that was available then was nursing and I knew for sure I didn't want to be a nurse but when I was about twelve my mother had bought a typewriter and I was always fascinated by it and I learned to type. I stayed home for a year because the year I was in Grade 12 was the year our mother died in the fall and so I stayed home the next year to help the housekeeper and then I went and took a year of training at Reliance School of Commerce in Regina and then worked in Regina for several years.”⁵⁶²

In 1953, Amaret quits her job at the law office and takes six months to travel to England to visit her Grannie Amy Hewson and the Aunties. Amy still lives at #3 Centurion Drive, just blocks away from Barbara and Harold Mills' home.

In June, Amaret and her cousins attend the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, and she begins writing her own history:

562 Interview with Amaret (Hewson) Smyth. Hewson, Margaret. July 19, 2018.



Amaret in England, visiting her father's cousin Jack Turvey & his wife Margaret. L to R: Margaret & Jack Turvey, Amaret Hewson. 1953.

“Coronation day was cold and windy. We were up at 5AM to be in our seats. People from Commonwealth countries had special seating right across from Westminster Abbey, but we had to be there early and were there until the middle of the afternoon and we were just about frozen by that time. But it was worth it.”⁵⁶³

She also celebrates her twenty-first birthday there. Amaret has become interested in the family history, and the baton is passed to her by the aged women relatives she visits: her grandmother Amy (Waters) Hewson, her Great Aunt May Waters, and the Pyne sisters, Rosa and Agnes.

The British ladies

By the early 1950s, Amy's health is rapidly declining as evidenced by her letters to son Geoff. But she is still a vigorous writer, even if she thinks and writes in all directions:

⁵⁶³ Interview with Amaret Smyth. Hewson, Margaret. 2018.

“Thank you very very much for your most welcome parcel, rec’d this morning full of most-welcome goods. We use a great deal of lard & the bacon special treats in fact all are thank you. Sunday. The Dr. has not come yet tho’ he is due...I am better today. She [new helper] is much brisker than the younger one was. Miss Rountree works hard. There have been many accidents on Snowdon. We have a new queen⁵⁶⁴ & her Mother was a great help to the late King.”⁵⁶⁵

Sideways at the end of the letter she writes:

“They still call me “Nan Nan”... I am some days better & some days worse. Geoffrey Mills & Barbara are both so nice but not well at moment. The Dr. calls me his star patient. I recovered so soon after being desperately ill.”⁵⁶⁶

The last known letter from Amy wishes her son Geoff a happy Easter in March 1952. In it, her handwriting has dramatically deteriorated—sentence lines slide downward, some letters are illegible. The two-page letter was perhaps done laboriously in short stints, if the different colored inks from one paragraph to the next are any indication.

Edith and May have moved into a Quaker old folk’s home, The Woodlands, at 434 Penn Road, Penn, Wolverhampton. Amy is still at home, with some help. The Turvey grandchildren have grown up, and are doing well:

“How the family seems to be growing up. Brian & Anne are looking forward to a small son in April, so we must hope for the best. Susan will be 4 in Feb. I think Brian is getting on well with his dentistry, but the practice & house & surgery cost a lot. Ralph too is making headway with economics, giving lectures to the students, & has just had a higher post given to him, so now is earning over £1,000 yr, he is 24 & can lecture in 4 or 5 foreign languages. He lives at a Quaker Hotel & is very comfortable. We seldom see him or Brian, living so far off.

“We are very happy here & taken care of to Norman & Jack’s satisfaction, there are about 24 bedrooms, we have a lovely big combined room, 2 beds,

564 King George VI dies on February 6, 1952, due to coronary thrombosis, making his twenty-seven-year-old daughter, Elizabeth II, the next queen, though she would not be crowned until June 2, 1953. Found 7/19/22 at <https://www.royal.uk/50-facts-about-queens-coronation-0#:~:text=Queen%20Elizabeth%20II%20was%20crowned,Abbey%20in%20her%20own%20right.>

565 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff Hewson. March 7, 1952.

566 *ibid.*



The Woodlands where Edith & May lived at the end of their life. Early 1950s.

& our own furniture & carpet. We are glad Mother [Amy] has a good help the work was getting a little too much for us. Bar is very good. I hope the socks we sent in Xmas box will be useful, the man said they were for field wear. Love to you all from May & Edith.”⁵⁶⁷

It appears that Brian and Anne ultimately have a big girl (as opposed to a small son) earlier than expected, and Amy’s new helper is working out much better than her predecessor:

“I rec’d your letter last week & thank you for parcel not yet come. The meat will be so useful we cannot get even tinned salmon or calves togues. We used to get Canadian salmon just frozen, cheap & very nice. Anne & Brian have another little girl. A big child....

“May very well but Edith has palpitations. Many people ill. I get up after breakfast my help could not do more for me & the house & does not rest during the day—Miss Wright rested every afternoon & did not give attention to the house & often came in late—all say how much better I am looking. I sit in a comfortable chair well wrapped up in yard for about 2 hours when suitable.”⁵⁶⁸

In June 1953, Amaret Hewson and two unknown Canadian cousins come to England for the coronation. They stay with Amy, but her health must be quite poor. They also visit Rosa and Agnes Pyne.

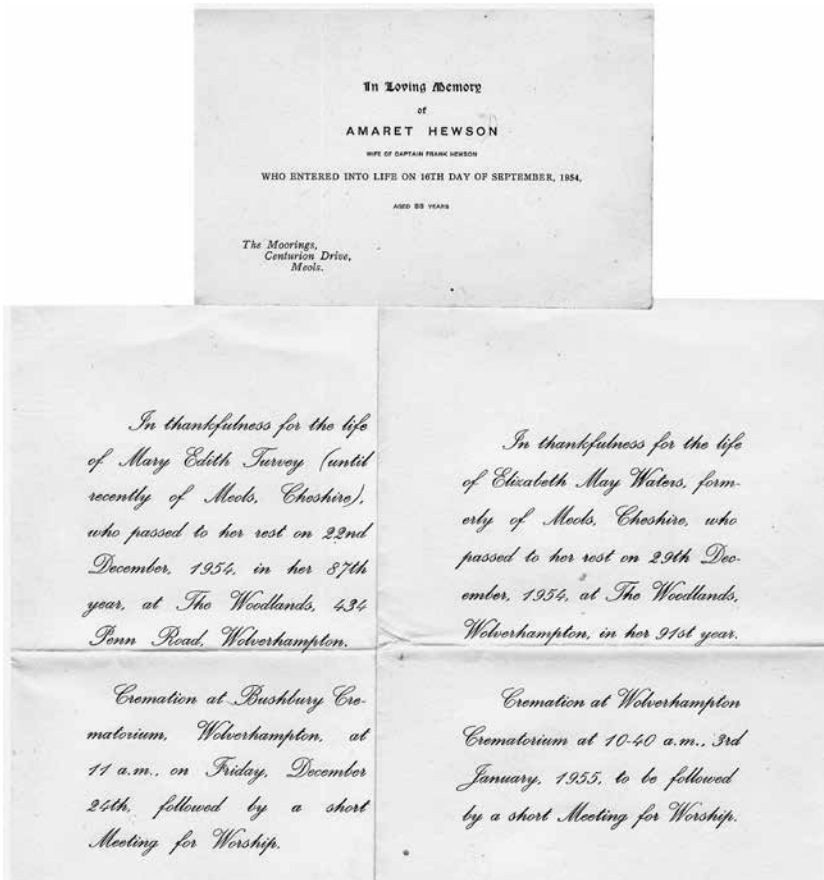
567 Letter. May Waters and Edith Turvey to nephew Geoffrey Hewson. May 12, 1951.

568 Letter. Amy Hewson to Geoff Hewson. March 22, 1952.

Passing of the ladies

The cousins, who had documented much of the family's history, would all die within a few years of this visit. Granny (Amy) Hewson passes away on September 16, 1954. Her sisters die within a week of each other a few months later—Edith Turvey on December 22 at age eighty-seven and May Waters on December 29 at age ninety-one.⁵⁶⁹

The three Pyne sisters also die in this period—Julia in 1950, Rosa in 1954, and Agnes in 1956. When Agnes Pyne dies, her will names eight-year-old namesake Rosemary Agnes Hewson, Geoff's youngest daughter, as a beneficiary of Agnes' stock investments.



The death notices for Amy Hewson, Edith Turvey & May Waters. Remarkably, the three Waters sisters who had been so close all their lives die within three months of each other. 1954.

⁵⁶⁹ Death notices for Amy Hewson, May Waters & Edith Turvey.

Amaret's life work

The passing along of the family history torch would continue with other relatives. Nearly a decade after Amaret's visit to England, Aunt Elsie sends her a letter that illustrates Amaret's continuing curiosity about the family history:

“Dear Amaret—Your Grannie said you were very interested in the Dakin Genealogy, so I copied this from a very valued book (by me) of the “History of Digby County” given to my father by the author in 1900. It is just about to fall apart from age & almost constant study by my father. Members of both my Father's and my mother's families are in the “History.” I think a good job for you would be to finish out the branch of Amaret Dakin & Capt. Thomas Waters from this.

“All the stories I have heard about our “antique family” are fast leaving my mind. Hope you can read what I have copied—you can easily see that my writing got “worse 'n' worsen” & mistakes “more 'n' morer”! as I went on & tried to keep the generations straight in my mind. Now you can puzzle it all out and go around in circles! I call it a prolific family! Lovingly, Aunt Elsie

“The Capt. Thos. & Amaret Dakin Waters genealogy are in a large Family Bible that we had at home & that I think Ede has. She was going to send it out to me but hasn't as yet. It is very heavy for posting. I must ask about it. Would you like it Amaret?”⁵⁷⁰

Amaret spends the rest of her life cataloguing and carrying on the family research and narrative. In fact, this book is only possible because Amaret gathered, researched, curated, and maintained that information.

Many young men made their way to the Hewson farm in search of Amaret, but all those suitors fell by the way and Jim Smyth was the one who captured her heart. In 1957, Amaret marries Jim Smyth, who she knew through his involvement in 4-H and social outings at the lake...plus, more importantly, the fact that her sister Barbara was dating Jim's brother George.

There is some discrepancy in stories about their engagement because Heather remembers Amaret showing her the engagement ring the morning after the Kennedy Rodeo dance and that being the first the family knew of it. However,

570 Letter. Elsie (Waters) Cairns to Amaret (Hewson) Smyth. February 21, 1961. The family Bible Elsie refers to here is the one shown in several places in this book. It is now in the possession of Stuart Smyth, Amaret's son.



Jim & Amaret Smyth as a young married couple. 1958.

Amaret's journal says they were at a dance at the lake when they get engaged in June 1957.

The wedding takes place on October 19, 1957. Heather (Hewson) Gosselin remembers Hilda Cairns coming over to help Amaret make the wedding cake. Amaret and Jim are married in the Langbank Church and the reception is at the community hall. After the festivities, the couple drive to Vancouver for a ten-day honeymoon. They settle down on Jim's farm, south of Kennedy, NW-11-12-3-W2, and build a new house there in 1967. Amaret continues to work casually for Peter W. Swan, Village Clerk and Insurance Agent in Kennedy until starting a family. Son Stuart is born in 1966 and daughter Nancy in 1968.

After her children grow up, Amaret rejoins the workforce in 1985, becoming the Administrator for the Village of Kennedy until her retirement in September 1997. Jim dies on March 12, 2018, and Amaret dies the following year, on June 3, 2019—the same day her parents were married eighty-eight years before, in 1931.

Barbara becomes a teacher

After graduating from Grade 12 in 1953, Barbara attends Normal School (Teachers College) in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. With one year of training, she can teach for three years before having to continue with further training. She instructs Grades 1 to 8 for one year at Golden Ridge School.⁵⁷¹

571 The building exists today on the Kipling-Moosomin Road between Kipling and #9 highway.

The following year she attends the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon to upgrade her teaching certificate. She becomes a beloved teacher. Years later, two Langbank students will share their fond memories of her. The first is Jack Gravener, grandson of the infamous Fred Gravener:

“I had Barbara as a teacher for my grade 8 year. It was a grade 7/8 combined class. I have very fond memories of her as a teacher. Looking back, I would say she was one of my favorites. She would have been about 30 years old at the time which made her one of our younger teachers which we appreciated as most of our teachers were quite “elderly” in their 40s or 50s. I recall thinking Barbara was very stylish in the way she dressed and always poised and in control. We never saw her lose her temper or be visibly upset by anything we did. If someone needed “scolding” she always had a measured response.

“I remember [a student] in grade 7 that year [who] had a reputation for impish behavior. As a result Barbara had him seated at the front of the room. One day she called me to the front to solve a math question. On my way to the board I had to pass [his] desk and he quickly stuck out his foot and tripped me. Barbara of course saw. She stared for several seconds at [him] before calmly saying “[...], if someone were to kick you in the teeth, it would be no less than you deserve.” That line in particular stuck with me as being both very funny and typical of the way she expressed herself.

“Barbara was a very good teacher. She could always explain whatever subject was being taught, clearly and succinctly. But it wasn’t all about the “3Rs” [reading, writing, arithmetic]. She never neglected art, music and phys ed in rounding out our education. In those days such subjects were considered “frills,” but not to Barbara. With no indoor gym it was never hard to convince Barbara to seize good weather days to get us outside and active. She was very fit herself and joined in enthusiastically.

“It seems to me Art, my favourite subject, was always scheduled on Friday and to me was the best reward for a week’s work. By that grade, for music, I was usually at the piano.

“For some reason I clearly remember Barbara’s unique walk. She had excellent posture but always seemed to be slightly on her tip toes and forward leaning, as if ready to spring into action. It’s funny what a kid remembers,

but I can't think of Barbara without remembering that distinct manner of her moving about the classroom...and perhaps life."⁵⁷²

A life-long neighbour of the Hewson family, Donna (Hitchcock) Worley also gave her teacher high marks:

"I remember 'Miss Hewson' as the first teacher to teach 'organized sports' in our school. She taught us in grades 7 & 8. She was the 'physical education' teacher and when we had our phys ed classes she would even change into her sports outfit complete with whistle. She took it seriously and when our class would jog so would she. She taught us volleyball and I can still remember her volleyball finger strengthening exercises. Track and field where she taught us the techniques of shot put, javelin and hurdles. We learned how to get a good start racing with starting blocks and a starting pistol! It was all very official. She taught us curling and drove us to the events in her four door Plymouth. She did her best for us to help us through our schooling.

"I also remember in the early fall of either my grade 7 or 8th year Barbara bought her sister, Heather, to the school from 3:00 to 3:30 for a week or two and taught us some neat little songs. The *Sloop John B* was one and I remember how Heather pounded on the piano and belted out those songs. We loved it because we didn't have to do schoolwork that last half hour and it was fun.

"Barbara's favorite word was 'courteous.' She was always telling us to be courteous and would often mention names of some who were courteous. I married one of them! Lol! She was very special and I do believe she and her sister, Amaret, had extra responsibilities considering how young the entire family was upon losing their mother. A great lady."⁵⁷³

After teaching for several years, she takes a turn on the home front in 1959-60, returning to the farm to look after her father and siblings—a role to which she is very dedicated.

"She was never afraid to tackle a new project, knitting a sweater for Robin (far too big) or tiling the hall floor from the kitchen to the bathroom. She

572 *Remembering Barbara*. June 2022. For more: mywatersfamily.com.

573 *ibid*.



Barbara & Granny Dickey at Granny Dickey's apartment in Whitewood, where she moved to from Langbank. 1960s.

was afraid the tiles might not stick so she hammered each one down. Those tiles are still there, more than fifty years later.”⁵⁷⁴

Barbara and Granny Dickey are very close. Barbara tells a story that once, long after high school, she was very late getting in from a date and decided to stay at Granny's instead of going home to the farm. However, the door was uncharacteristically locked, so Barbara climbed through a window.⁵⁷⁵ Though we don't know exactly how the conversation went the next morning when Granny awoke to find Barbara there, her sister Heather says, “By this time Barbara was probably in her twenties. She would have had a convincing reason, and Granny would've just shaken her head.”⁵⁷⁶

Granny Dickey is very interested in Amaret and Barbara's relationships. When Barbara decides not to marry a longtime boyfriend, Granny Dickey is very disappointed because he is from a “very good family.”⁵⁷⁷

574 Interview with Heather (Hewson) Gosselin. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.

575 *ibid.*

576 Interview with Heather (Hewson) Gosselin. Hewson, Margaret. November 2021.

577 Interview with Heather (Hewson) Gosselin. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.

Heather & Rosemary take up domestic mantle

Meanwhile at home, Heather and Rosemary have taken up where their sisters left off with full-time domestic work until their high school graduation. Heather recalls:

“From Grade 10 on, I was looking after a house of five—cooking, washing, cleaning—until I finished high school. It didn’t occur to me at the time, but it was a huge responsibility to have, and I think I should have done better in high school than I did. I was also taking and teaching piano lessons in high school.

“I really had no female mentor—Amaret and Barbara were siblings and had their own lives.” It is only later in life that I truly realize how much I was missing out on.”⁵⁷⁸

Rosemary recalls, “I remember we always wore rubber boots to hang out the clothes because there were a lot of snakes on the hill.” They cook and eat a lot of wild meat, such as venison, which isn’t their favorite, but the price is right. “I never liked it,” Heather recalls. “The fat would stick in the top of your mouth. But it was free!” Once a week, they churn cream into butter in the washing machine, which in those days had a dasher that fit over the agitator for that very purpose. They take a break nearly every day by traveling the mile to Aunt Sadie’s in a little red car for afternoon coffee.⁵⁷⁹ Their responsibilities don’t end when they go away to university in Saskatoon to study education at the turn of the new decade. As Heather describes:

“I was one of the major caregivers of the family—I did the cleaning, freezing, and washing every summer the five years I went to university. I did enjoy being on the farm. I’d get up in the morning and make bread, vacuum, make a large meal for lunch,⁵⁸⁰ get groceries, pick vegetables in the garden, do the laundry, change the sheets or any other jobs that needed to be done for the smooth running of the house.”⁵⁸¹

But the two close sisters also have a lot of fun living away from home together, first at university in Saskatoon and then moving to Regina where they both

578 Interview with Heather (Hewson) Gosselin. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.

579 Interview with Heather (Hewson) Gosselin. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.

580 Called “dinner” on the farm.

581 Interview with Heather (Hewson) Gosselin. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.

teach. In 1969, Heather graduates with a B.A. and a B. Ed. and Rosemary with a Standard A Teaching Certificate. In the spring of 1969 as the sisters complete their education and look for employment, their father is relieved they won't be far from home:

“When we [Heather and I] were in Saskatoon going to university, we had applied in Edmonton and also in Regina, and we'd had interviews. In Edmonton they accepted Heather but not me and in Regina they accepted both of us. I remember coming home and telling our dad we were going to teach in Regina and he said, 'that's good because Edmonton is too far away!' We came home on weekends.”⁵⁸²

These were very carefree years, although both girls are very conscientious teachers and work hard. They share a house with two other girls in Regina and all enjoy very busy social lives. Their house is a social hub as they host parties and visiting friends or family members often stay over.

During this time, a comradeship develops between Robin, Heather and Rosemary, and Rosemary recalls always having a feeling that Robin “knew her.”⁵⁸³ The three young adults enjoy spending time together when the girls are home on weekends, or Robin is in Regina. Although Robin enjoys socializing with his sisters, he does not always enjoy the faster pace in the city. Heather recalls one time the three were shopping together: “Rosemary and I had an agenda, and after a few stops the exasperated Robin said, ‘Well, what are we going to run by next?’”⁵⁸⁴

Without a full-time female presence at the farmhouse, the men take on more domestic roles. Robin becomes interested in cooking, once asking Heather for a lesson in gravy making. He also makes pickles, but, he says, “I wouldn't win a prize at the Kennedy Fair because I didn't slice the cucumbers thinly enough.”⁵⁸⁵

Robin is pleased when the sisters come home on weekends and does his best to have the house “presentable,” if not up to the standards of his sisters. One Friday he tells the Co-op manager, “I have to get home. The dust inspectors are coming for the weekend.”⁵⁸⁶

The girls also enjoy being at the farm, going out to help chase cattle, or for rides on the all-terrain vehicle. They are quite quick to comment if they feel Tom

582 Interview with Dave & Rosemary (Hewson) Cowan. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.

583 Interview with Rosemary (Hewson) Cowan. Hewson, Margaret. 2021.

584 Interview with Heather (Hewson) Gosselin. Hewson, Margaret. 2021.

585 *ibid.*

586 *ibid.*



Geoff & his family, minus Amaret, standing at the corner of the farmhouse.
L to R: Barbara, Leonard, Geoff, Rosemary, Heather, Thomas & Robin. 1963.

or Robin's attitudes needed "modernizing" and are not shy in giving advice in any area they feel is needed. The advice is sometimes taken, sometimes ignored.

As the youngest Hewsons forge confidently into adulthood, the world is about to change again. The 1960s will be remembered as a very different decade from the relatively peaceful 1950s. Activism against social injustices will create tensions across North America, and the Vietnam War, which will last for an unprecedented twenty years, begins.⁵⁸⁷

Canada is coming into its own as a nation and will develop its own flag, the maple leaf. Expo 67 takes place in Montreal during Canada's centennial year and focuses the world's attention on Canada. In 1968, Pierre Elliot Trudeau becomes the fifteenth Prime Minister of Canada, reflecting the exuberant spirit of the 1960s. Though generally failing in the economic arena, he had a strong and coherent social vision. Trudeau famously said, "The past is to be respected and acknowledged, but not to be worshipped. It is our future in which we will find our greatness."⁵⁸⁸

For the Hewsons and related families, the 1960s and 1970s will be full of world travel to visit family and friends and to explore new destinations, much as their forefathers had done before them when they traveled on the high seas. This travel, however, will be a little more comfortable and convenient than a nineteenth century barque.

587 The Vietnam War, also known as the Second Indochina War, was a conflict in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia from November 1, 1955 to the fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975. It was the second of the Indochina Wars and was officially fought between North Vietnam and South Vietnam. For more: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnam_War.

588 *Pierre Elliot Trudeau Biography*. Canadian Museum of History website. Found 5/13/21 at <https://www.historymuseum.ca/cmc/exhibitions/hist/biography/biographi270e.html>.

Chapter 31

Keeping the International Connection Alive

TRAVEL TO EUROPE IN THE 1960S has become less expensive and easier with air travel having become mainstream in the '50s. The Hewson children carry on Geoff and Brian's legacy by visiting their British relatives often. Following Amaret's lead in 1953, Barbara Hewson travels to London in the summer of 1960, and is met by her namesake:

“Aunt Barbara went to London to meet her at the airport. She was to be able to recognize Barbara because Barbara would be wearing a blue straw hat—at that time women wore hats when dressed up, such as shopping in the city, or going to church. Also at that time one ‘dressed up’ for a plane flight. How times have changed!”⁵⁸⁹

Geoff, Heather, and Rosemary go at Christmas in 1962 and stay for three weeks, though the teenagers are not eager to miss the holiday social scene with their friends. In London they visit Elizabeth Mills, Barbara's daughter; then Norman and Jeanne Turvey in Audley End, where they also meet their

son Brian and his wife, Anne. They stay with John and Margaret Turvey in Bournemouth, and finally, they go to Meols for a visit with Barbara and Harold Mills. Geoffrey and Elaine Mills are also in Meols.

The visits go both ways across the Atlantic—in the summer of 1963, Elizabeth Mills and two friends come from England to Canada. The three city girls are doing a cross-country bus tour and stop off for a week at the farm in Langbank. They are all fascinated by prairie farm life.

Elizabeth, a primary school teacher in London, is engaged to marry Philip Prashner, a family doctor in London. They will marry in 1965 and have two children, David and Sarah. Meanwhile, Elizabeth's brother Geoffrey becomes a naval engineer and marries Elaine Skelston, also a primary school teacher.

In the summer of 1964, Aunt Barbara comes to Langbank—the first and only time she is in Canada—and she has a wonderful time. She is interested to meet the people and see the places her brother has written about in the forty-five years since he came to Canada. Her visit is a whirlwind of activity because not only must she be reacquainted with her brother and nieces but also needs to meet people like Granny Dickey, Sadie, her nephews and Amaret's husband



Elizabeth & Philip Prashner's wedding day. Center: Philip & his new bride Elizabeth. Left: Geoffrey Mills. Standing in front of him is Philip's mother Bella Prashner. To Elizabeth's right is her mother Barbara Mills. Standing behind them is her father Harold Mills. Extreme right, Geoffrey's wife Elaine (Skelston) Mills. February 3, 1966.

Jim.⁵⁹⁰ After a walk around the farm, Barbara comments on an interesting find to her nephew Robin:

“She mentioned to me that she had come across a very interesting rock, which she described as blue and very misshapen. It was later identified as the remnant of a well-licked cattle cobalt salt block.”⁵⁹¹

In 1969, Heather travels to Europe with a friend, Janet, to visit Aunt Barbara and other relatives:

“We went on separate flights and before Janet arrived, I spent time with Norman and Jeanne in Audley End. Janet and I spent three weeks in Europe and ended up in Meols with Aunt Barbara and Uncle Harold before flying back to Canada. We had not really allowed ourselves enough time to get from Munich, Germany to Meols by the time I had told Aunt Barbara we would be there. We ended up travelling nonstop from Wednesday to Saturday to get there. Our trip from Munich to Liverpool, where Aunt Barbara and Uncle Harold met us, involved train, river boat on the Rhine, travelling with some Americans we met on the boat in their rented car to Koblenz, and then by train to Oostend, Belgium where we caught a ferry to Dover.

“The ferry was very crowded and the crossing was very rough. At one point a young man who was wearing a kilt said, ‘Women and children and men in kilts off first.’ From Dover we got a train to London and from London to Liverpool. It happened that it was a holiday weekend and the train was very crowded so we had to stand for some of the journey.

“By the time Uncle Harold and Aunt Barbara picked us up in Liverpool about 4 PM we were beyond exhausted. We arrived in Meols about 30 minutes later. After tea (supper to us) Aunt Barbara suggested we might like to walk along the Prom (beach). Uncle Harold said, ‘Did it ever occur to you, Barbara, that they might just like to rest?’ To which Aunt Barbara, never one to waste any time, said, ‘They didn’t come all this way to rest.’”⁵⁹²

590 Interview with Heather (Hewson) Gosselin. Hewson, Margaret. 2021.

591 Interview with Robin Hewson. Hewson, Margaret. 2021.

592 Interview with Heather (Hewson) Gosselin. Hewson, Margaret. 2021.

Chapter 32

A New Generation Turns the Page

THOUGH MANY PEOPLE THINK OF STAGFLATION and the oil crisis when they think of the economy of the 1970s, conditions for farmers in the Canadian prairies are mostly favorable. Poor weather conditions resulting in diminished yields overseas means that demand for agricultural products explodes. The Soviet Union negotiates a multiyear contract for American wheat and feed grains in 1972 during a set of political events sometimes referred to as the Great Grain Robbery.⁵⁹³ And within the span of two years, wheat prices double. Skyrocketing prices and generally good growing conditions mean that 1973 and 1974 are very prosperous years in rural Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan resource economy is also booming.

Later in the decade, storm clouds begin to gather as unemployment and inflation rates start to increase dramatically. Jobs are erased by mechanization and the Canadian dollar is losing value. Energy prices increase significantly. Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau introduces the National Energy Program, which is intended to increase Canadian ownership in the oil industry and redistribute the wealth generated by oil production towards the federal government. This

593 1973 United States–Soviet Union wheat deal. Found 11/14/21 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1973_United_States%E2%80%93Soviet_Union_wheat_deal.

program proves to be extremely unpopular in the west and contributes to western alienation.⁵⁹⁴

Tom reports on the political situation to sister Heather in 1976:

“It has been rather a dull month on the provincial and national scene. The Trudeau’s have been off to Cuba and Venezuela and Mexico. There is to be a national P.C. Leadership convention in February. At one time there were 17 candidates but it is now down to 11 with no clear cut leader among them.”⁵⁹⁵

A bright light wanes

The early part of the 1970s also ushers in a bright era for the Hewson siblings. They are establishing themselves, traveling, getting married and having children. But as the new decade dawns, another of the family’s elders will pass on, leaving an indelible mark on the family.

After John Dickey’s death, Janet lived for another thirteen years, during which time she has continued to be a big part of her grandchildren’s lives.

Granny Dickey is a very pragmatic and enlightened woman, and a woman of great faith and integrity. Robin remembered when the question of working on Sunday during harvest was an issue. Geoff didn’t like it and Robin asked Granny what she thought. She said, “The Lord gave us the crop, it’s up to us to get it harvested.”⁵⁹⁶

Janet is also very well read and adores doing crossword puzzles. She has a huge collection of books, covering an entire wall in her living room, everything from Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* to books by L. M. Montgomery, Charles Dickens, and Thornton W Burgess, to name just a few.

She continues to live in Langbank as long as she is able, then moves to a small apartment in Whitewood Lodge. As she begins to suffer from dementia, Janet lives for a time with her daughter and son-in-law, Sadie and Harold Cox, before moving to Willowdale Lodge in Kipling. She later lives in the Lakeside Home in Wolseley, where she dies in October 1971 at the age of eighty-eight.

594 *National Energy Program*. Bregha, Francois. *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Found 11/12/21 at <https://archive.ph/2013.01.05-024625/http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/national-energy-program>.

595 Letter. Tom Hewson to Heather Hewson. February 1, 1976. P.2.

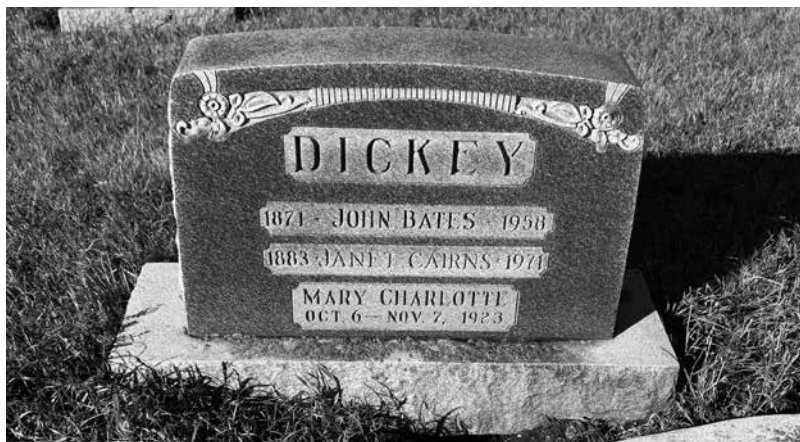
596 Interview with Robin Hewson. Hewson, Margaret. 2021.

Janet had been a very patient mother and she seldom needed to scold her Dickey birds.⁵⁹⁷ When they were ill, she was a great comforter with treasures coming out of her infamous trunk. When Amy was ill for nearly a year and didn't start school until she was in Grade Four, her mother taught her at home.⁵⁹⁸ Janet taught her daughters all the domestic arts, including knitting, which the girls used to make tiny scarves for their large and well-dressed doll collection. Along with her self-taught husband John, they had made a wonderful parent team.

The family mourns the tragedy that such a sharp and bright mind should end in dementia, while also celebrating her long and fruitful life.

In 1979, Amy (Dickey) Reynolds writes of her parents:

“...the people who live in the district will long remember the names of pioneers like John Dickey and his wife Janet who are deceased but left their mark through honesty, zeal and public spirited attitude as they cultivated the soil and helped with the advancement of the life of the Poplar Grove community.”⁵⁹⁹



Janet & John Dickey's headstone, including the name of their infant daughter Mary Charlotte, with whom they are buried. The Dickeys are laid to rest in close proximity to Janet's parents, the Rev. & Alice Cairns & other family members in the Kennedy Community Cemetery.

597 5 Little Dickey Birds. Amy (Dickey) Reynolds. P. 14.

598 *ibid.* P.11.

599 *Pioneers of Poplar Grove. Mingling Memories: A History of Wapella and Districts.* Reynolds, Amaret. 1979. P.114-115

Rosemary & Dave

When his youngest child, Rosemary, marries her high-school sweetheart Dave Cowan, Geoff Hewson accepts his new son-in-law, but that doesn't keep him from imparting lessons he feels are important:

“He would sit in his chair on Sunday afternoon and talk to me. ‘See my skiddoo out there,’ he would say, ‘I bought that because I don’t drink or smoke...you like my colored TV? That was bought on smoke money because I don’t smoke!’ He had a great influence on me. I admired him as an English gentleman. He was pruning me, making sure I was going to be the right guy.”⁶⁰⁰

Geoff needn't have worried, as it's clear that Rosemary and Dave are meant to be together. The two had observed each other plenty through high school. Dave says, “I noticed her in school...She was radiant...I had noticed Rosemary for a long time.” Rosemary also admired Dave from afar: “I remember looking out the Grade 10 window and seeing Dave in the school yard and saying, ‘I’d sure like to date that Dave Cowan.’ I also pictured myself on Dave’s farm...”⁶⁰¹

After graduating high school, Dave works for a bank in Wynyard which he discovers does not suit him. He then gets hired by Steel Gas (Dome Petroleum) in Thompson, Manitoba and has a much better experience. He loves the north country and fishing. “It was all young people, but it was long hours of work,” he says.⁶⁰²

Dave and Rosemary marry on March 26, 1971 and settle in Thompson. But in August, they return to Dave's family farm near Langbank, NE-16-13-3-W2, where he farms in partnership with his brother Ward.

Ebb and flow; trials and joys of a young farming couple

Rosemary is happy to leave Thompson and come back home to be a farmer's wife, but immediately there are issues:

“I brought Rosemary back to a house with no running water, the roof leaked, it had been built but not finished... “when we came back from Thompson [in August of 1971], I realized I wouldn't have any money until

600 Interview with Dave & Rosemary (Hewson) Cowan. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.

601 *ibid.*

602 *ibid.*



Rosemary & Dave Cowan on their wedding day. March 26, 1971.

[I got a crop] next fall... I went in and saw the Co-op manager and said, 'I have a bit of problem...I don't have enough money to get through the winter.' He said I could charge it and when I got money next fall, I could come in and pay. That's how it was in those days...That's what community was like."

The young couple have something quite significant in common: they have both lost a parent as a child. When Dave was thirteen years old his father, Murray, died of cancer; his mother, Molly, at age forty-two was left a widow with four children. Said Dave:

"She was something else. She was a great influence. She was a woman of faith so really just believed it would be okay. My dad, before he died, said 'Molly you can't farm', (we had five quarters), 'you have to get rid of them', after he died, mom said, 'why couldn't we farm?' About six months after he died, someone asked my mom 'Molly, have you mourned?', and she said, 'for goodness sakes, I have three boys, I don't have time to mourn!' I've got just wonderful memories of growing up. Children are far more resilient than you ever give them credit for, far more resilient. It seemed to me a wonderful life." ⁶⁰³

603 *ibid.*

Having this sad shared experience makes Dave and Rosemary a resilient couple. As Dave says:

“At times there have been great trials. We’ve learned not to be alarmed at some of the trials of life. The scriptures actually say, ‘consider it pure joy when you go through many trials.’ You learn something in the valleys... Wisdom comes through experience.”⁶⁰⁴

There are money issues, as with many young farming couples during down cycles, but it is tempered by the freedom of farming:

“The best part of being a farm wife was the freedom. The worst part was the lack of financial security. I was used to that on my father’s farm and Dave and I didn’t have it.”⁶⁰⁵

On October 7, 1971, Dave and Rosemary welcome their first child, Jennifer. Having been the baby of a large family, Rosemary herself has no experience with babies:

“I remember [my mother-in-law] Molly saying, a couple of days before Jennifer was born, ‘I think you should get a few things.’ I said, ‘well what do I need?’ She said, ‘well, you know, some diapers, a baby bath, a diaper pail.’ I’d never had anything to do with children!”⁶⁰⁶

Their second daughter, Merodee, arrives a few years later in 1974 and son Mark is a surprise in 1984.

While the kids are growing up Rosemary does a great deal of substitute teaching and she and Dave drive the school bus for many years. Rosemary is one of the first women in the area to drive a bus. Her sister Heather says Rosemary’s students had good reason to like their teacher:

“She became quite famous for her chocolate fudge and whenever she subbed, her students hoped she would bring some fudge to share, which she often did.”⁶⁰⁷

Ultimately, Dave reflected on how looking at history has given him an appreciation for the long view:

604 *ibid.*

605 *ibid.*

606 *ibid.*

607 *ibid.*

“...I kept a journal in the '70s and '80s. I would write ‘well I don’t know how we’re going to get out of this one, the crop froze,’ or ‘there’s absolutely nothing in the canola.’ I would look back at it years later and it was the most amazing thing—cattle prices were up that fall, or, we sold the frozen grain to a feedlot. I learned that you want to look at farming over a ten-year period because it ebbs and flows.”⁶⁰⁸

Dave describes his farming experience, and the family relationships that made it all work:

“It’s one of the biggest privileges to be involved with a family farm...The best part was having a wife that supported me. Work was hard and we put in crazy hours. The worst part was neglecting family. My brother and I would work crazy hours but I think it’s an honour to have my family still involved in farming. And the highlight of my life was having children with Rosemary.”⁶⁰⁹

Rosemary says, “It’s a blessing to have the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren close by.”⁶¹⁰ Their three children have produced ten grandchildren and numerous great-grandchildren, many of whom live and farm in the Langbank area. On their fiftieth wedding anniversary in 2021, Rosemary’s children present her with a ring to mark the occasion as have previous Waters generations.

Robin & Dorothy

When asked in a 2019 interview with his daughter Margaret what he considered to be the best decision of his life, Robin Hewson immediately replied, “marrying Dorothy.”

Their love story begins with classic matchmaking: a blind date, as described by Dorothy:

“I taught in Eston where I met Dianne McLeod from Langbank (she was Dianne Dean then) and she said, ‘There’s somebody I want you to meet when we go down to the farm,’ and she introduced me to Robin.”⁶¹¹

608 *ibid.*

609 *ibid.*

610 *ibid.*

611 Interview with Robin & Dorothy (Sweet) Hewson. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.

They meet on the weekend of December 3, 1971. Dorothy is drawn to the hard-working Robin—especially to his penchant for making puns and his kind heart. Dianne’s instincts are right, and the two of them hit it off immediately. They begin dating, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Harold Cox tells a story of their engagement becoming public:

“Robin had been away visiting Dorothy one weekend. Sunday evening, Sadie and I had just gone to bed when the phone rang, so I got up and answered it. It was Rosemary, calling to let us know that Robin and Dorothy were engaged. Robin had stopped in on his way home. I got all the information, and went back to bed and reported it to Sadie. We were just getting settled down when the phone rang again, so I got up again. That time it was Robin, calling with the news. I didn’t let on that I already knew, offered our congratulations, and asked if it was all right to tell people. To which Robin replied, ‘Well, yes, but you better hurry if you want to beat Rosemary!’”⁶¹²

Robin and Dorothy, yet another farmer and teacher duo in the family, are married on July 14, 1973, in Saskatoon, and the whole Langbank clan drives the



Robin & Dorothy on their wedding day. Their striking glasses, very fashionable in '70s, complete their wedding attire. July 14, 1973.

612 Email from Chris Evans. November 12, 2022.



The Hewson family at the wedding in Saskatoon. L to R: Barbara, Amaret & Jim, Thomas, Leonard, Dorothy & Robin, Dave, Heather, Geoff & Rosemary. July 14, 1973.

five hours to attend. “It was the first time the [Hewson] farmhouse was empty overnight since it had been built in 1935,” Robin’s brother Leonard notes.⁶¹³

They honeymoon in Cypress Hills for a few days but must quickly return to the farm at Langbank. Robin had finished silaging a few days before the wedding but doesn’t have much free time; there is a lot of summer work to be done putting up feed for the cattle. Dorothy remembers:

“When we were first married, they [Tom and Robin] had a lot of cattle, because grain hadn’t been doing that well. Robin did bale after bale those first summers and lots of winter chores. Tom and Robin had a very close relationship and they farmed very well together.”⁶¹⁴

In 1974, Robin and Dorothy build a new home in the Hewson farmyard and Dorothy, a city girl from Saskatoon, enthusiastically embraces farm life. She becomes interested in gardening, and will eventually have a huge garden, from

613 Interview with Leonard Hewson. Hewson, Margaret. 2021.

614 Interview with Robin & Dorothy (Sweet) Hewson. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.

which she will share generously. She will also learn to grow beautiful flowers and will often be called on to provide floral decorations at weddings and other celebrations. Though she knows very little about food preparation when she is first married, Dorothy becomes a talented cook who is always interested in trying new dishes.

Dorothy quickly learns the lesson of meals at the farm that Alice Cairns knew all too well a half-century before her: Whoever is around at mealtime gets fed. Unlike Alice, though, it makes Dorothy quite nervous:

“When we were first married, Grampa told me, ‘When someone’s here working on the farm, we feed them. There is no question about this. That’s what we do here.’ I thought, *okay!* Whether they were building bins or hauling manure, they ate at my kitchen table. Heather and Barbara came over sometimes...There would be Leonard, Tom, Grampa and Robin...I would feel such panic when I had to cook for them all. Maybe that’s what spurred their [Geoff and Tom’s] marriages.”⁶¹⁵

Sadie and Harold Cox’s youngest daughter Roberta Cox remembers about Dorothy:

“When your mother first came to the farm, she would often ask family members (Mum or Amaret) for the recipe of something they had made. She would get very disgusted when they couldn’t give her specific amounts but said about the punch, ‘well I made some tea and then I added orange juice and some sugar and water, and a bit of lemon juice.’ The seasoned cooks didn’t necessarily have recipe measurements as they had learned from their mothers or aunts. Examples such as this show some of the difficulties encountered by city women joining the family.”⁶¹⁶

In addition to the family, Robin and Dorothy are grateful for numerous friends, including the Goddards, Nansons, Dumonceauxs, Johnstons, McLeods, and Cairnses. “They made life richer,” Dorothy says, “we were very fortunate to be in a community with such good people.”⁶¹⁷

615 *ibid.*

616 Interview with Roberta Cox. Hewson, Margaret. 2021.

617 Interview with Robin & Dorothy (Sweet) Hewson. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.

And they are blessed with children, beginning with Margaret in 1974. When Margaret is born, Robin is swathing wheat:

“Uncle Harold and Aunt Sadie took Dorothy to the hospital in Kipling and then came and told me. We didn’t have communication then when you were out on a machine.”⁶¹⁸

Dorothy’s labour with Jeanette in 1976 is very short, and Robin must make a very quick trip to the hospital in Kipling twenty miles away. “I almost hit a cow on the way in,” Robin says.

Then Geoffrey arrives in the summer of 1982. “Geoffrey was born a month early, in July, while his father was watching a Roughrider game,” Dorothy says. “He [Geoffrey] knew he didn’t want to disrupt harvest.”⁶¹⁹

Humour is a staple

Robin is known for his sense of humour which is particularly evident in a letter he and Dorothy wrote to his sister Heather (whom he calls “H.H.”) when she is traveling abroad in 1975.

Though he is a regular churchgoer, Robin isn’t keen on all the meetings: “Dorothy had to go to another stupid church meeting tonight. They are having rather too many of them.”⁶²⁰

Dorothy gets in her share of wittiness later in the letter:

“I found the annual meeting interesting. I wonder, though, why people dislike making motions. My name probably occurred ten times in the minutes...Robin is a credit union man now. He even has a meeting this week. I’ll be able to razz him about his meetings.”⁶²¹

They describe the growth of their first child Margaret, still in her first year:

“The squirt is growing like a weed (stinkweed) and is quite fat. She can make her walker back up but has not found the ahead gear yet. She is rather partial to pulling hair now.”⁶²²

618 *ibid.*

619 *ibid.*

620 Letter. Robin & Dorothy Hewson to Heather Hewson. March 10-11, 1975. P.1.

621 *ibid.*

622 *ibid.*



Dorothy with “fat” baby Margaret. Winter 1975.

Dorothy adds:

“Barbara and I went to see [an acquaintance]. She managed to make me feel that Margaret was too fat...a model of tact.

“Last week I had Margaret to U.C.W. She screamed when we sang. She also grabbed Clara’s pierced ear. I don’t think she was too popular.

“Just lately she has made great progress by turning over and starting to crawl. She’s very proud of herself.”⁶²³

Cousin Chris Evans recalls Robin’s inventive storytelling:

“When I was in high school, I used to spend some time at the farm in the summers, helping Dorothy. One day (when Margaret was very young and Jeanette not yet born) after the noon meal Dorothy and I were doing the dishes and Robin was reading Margaret a story, sitting in the big comfy chair they used to have in the kitchen. The story was about a family of rabbits, and all of a sudden Dorothy and I heard, “And Mother Rabbit said, ‘Shut up and eat your carrots!’” Dorothy and I looked at each other and she said, “I don’t remember that part of the story.”⁶²⁴

The young couple is active in the community. Langbank is building a new community facility, and though Robin pretends to gripe about it, he and Dorothy will contribute, as they do to many community activities:

623 Letter. Robin & Dorothy Hewson to Heather Hewson. March 10-11, 1975. P.3.

624 Email from Chris Evans. November 12, 2022.

“They are going to build a new curling rink in L’bank as the old one is in danger of caving in. I suppose that I will have to make a donation to that.”⁶²⁵

And he reports about the Liberal Prime Minister, of whom he is no fan:

“Trudeau has gone to Europe for a while to try and drum up more trade with the Common Market countries. He went and said hi to the Pope when he was there.”⁶²⁶

Dorothy reports her tomatoes are up, but the green peppers aren’t. She’s putting flowers in soon and “Robin says we’re in a X!X! greenhouse.”⁶²⁷

They’ve begun spring cleaning and have painted the bathroom. They’re also participating in the community effort to introduce the new metric system that has been sweeping across Canada for the past four years: “We made a few metric posters which looked not bad as Robin felt obliged to put smiley faces on them.”⁶²⁸

In 1977, Thomas moves out of the farmhouse, and has his meals with Robin and Dorothy’s family for another decade. Uncle Tom loves to tease his young niece Margaret at mealtime by stealing bits of her food. Dorothy recalls:



Thomas with nieces Jeanette & Margaret at sister-in-law Dorothy’s kitchen table. The remnants of a chicken dinner and Tom’s birthday cake are on the table. Grandpa Geoff sips tea. 1978.

625 *ibid.*

626 *ibid.* P.2.

627 *ibid.*

628 *ibid.* The conversion to metric was highly controversial and mostly unpopular. Just the month after the writing of this letter, Fahrenheit temperatures would be replaced by Celsius. And by the fall, rainfall would first be measured in millimetres and snow in centimetres. For more: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metrication_in_Canada.

“He would distract her and snatch a bite of her dessert. Margaret would resolve to never let that happen again, and then it would happen again at the next meal.”⁶²⁹

While her husband farms, Dorothy raises the children, and does some teaching until a few years after Geoffrey’s birth, when she switches to tutoring high school students in math and science—a job she really enjoys:

“I wanted to be a teacher like my big sister...I taught on and off, and then part-time, and then gave it up all together, but later started tutoring... There must have been 80-90 students I tutored.”⁶³⁰

Teaching one on one is a rewarding experience for Dorothy and under her encouraging direction, many students gain confidence and find success in troublesome subjects. Dorothy’s tutoring fulfills a previously unmet educational need in the community.

629 Interview with Robin & Dorothy (Sweet) Hewson. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.

630 *ibid.*

Chapter 33

Globe-Trotting Adventures

WHILE SOME HEWSONS ARE STARTING FAMILIES and working on the farm and teaching, others are off seeking adventure on exotic shores. In 1973, there is a teacher shortage in Queensland, Australia, and the Queensland Department of Education conducts interviews for teachers across Canada and the US. Heather is hired for a teaching position in Toowoomba, Queensland, a small city quite close to Brisbane. And so begins her love affair with Australia, where she stays for more than two years. During school holidays she travels over much of the country.

One of the happy results of Heather's international travel is that there is a great deal of correspondence, which provides a picture of what was happening back on the farm during the 1970s as well as documenting the family's travel. It's reflective of the same kind of narrative that emerged from the nineteenth century correspondence between the seafaring Waters men and their families.

In the fall of 1974 and early in 1975 Tom writes to his sister, painting a picture of the early 1970s economic boom with government schemes, drilling for oil and rising energy prices:

“We haven't heard anything about how the oil well drilling came out so guess there was nothing. The provincial government is going to give the



Heather with koala in Australia. 1974.

companies a better deal on exploration and production. No dynamite sales since you left. They have not got anymore in Winnipeg yet. Cattle and grain futures have been somewhat lower, but the stock market is up...”⁶³¹

Locally, construction is lively in Regina:

“The Southgate mall is now expected to open in late winter due to delays with strikes, etc. Quite a bunch of houses to be built west of Pasqua and just north of Gordon Road...”⁶³²

“...There is a new Sheraton hotel started on the corner west of the Regina Inn.”⁶³³

At Christmas 1974, in Heather’s first year there, Geoff and a friend travel to Australia and the three spend the holiday season touring through the center of Australia and Tasmania. On January 19, 1975, Geoff writes to the family of one excursion:

631 Letter. Tom Hewson to Heather & Geoffrey Hewson. January 5, 1975. Geoff was visiting Heather in Australia at the time.

632 Letter. Tom Hewson to Heather Hewson. November 10, 1974.

633 Letter. Tom Hewson to Heather Hewson. September 21, 1975.

“The coach took us all to the top of Mount Wellington this morning some 400’ high I believe & we had a splendid view of the city [Hobart] & harbour & several times we have seen the wrecked bridge. There are 2 spans out of it & the debris landed mostly on the one carrier that caused the accident & the carrier sank.

“I saw a dead animal on the road this morning like a very large barn rat. I would have liked the coach to stop but quite a bit of traffic & the coach goes quite fast...”⁶³⁴

Geoff will also celebrate his seventy-second birthday there.

Barbara visits Heather “Down Under”

The second-oldest Hewson, Barbara, has always been quite athletic—one year winning the top award as the best athlete at the Langbank Area Field Day. She is very active throughout her life and likes nothing better than a good long hike. She teaches in Wapella and Langbank for a decade, where she encourages and helps her students attend area track and field events.

Along with teaching Barbara begins her own adventures abroad. The first is a ski trip to Austria on the 1968 Christmas holiday. Barbara is terrified most of the time, and when asked in later years if she recalled the skiing trip, she says she could never forget it. She would never ski again.⁶³⁵

In 1971, Barbara decides it is time for a career change. She takes a business course in Regina, and then attends the University of British Columbia in Vancouver and the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon where she obtains her Bachelor of Education and takes masters classes in Education. For a brief time in 1975, she is unemployed, and spends her time at home on the farm. This draws the critical attention of the same blunt acquaintance who disapproved of baby Margaret’s weight, as Dorothy describes to Heather: “She managed to make me feel that ...Barbara should have a job...”⁶³⁶

The neighbour needn’t have worried about Barbara’s industriousness. In the short interim between jobs during the summer of 1975, Barbara decides to visit Heather in Australia. She is eager to hike and see the sites. She climbs the nearly four-mile height of Mount Mitchell:

634 Letter. Geoff Hewson to his family. January 19, 1975. P.1.

635 Interview with Heather (Hewson) Gosselin. Hewson, Margaret. September 2021.

636 Letter. Dorothy (Sweet) Hewson to Heather Hewson. March 11, 1975.

“The footpath first of all went through a rain forest vegetation then came out into a drier area with black boys (trees that grow 1 foot in 100 years and have bark about 2 inches thick so fires do not harm them)...Climbing the mountain was like getting your head up in the treetops and I heard the whipbird, and on the higher reaches heard the Prince Albert lyre bird madly singing away...There were lots of basalt cliffs and some basalt steps along the path. Toowoomba is all on a volcanic rock base of basalt...”

She writes home about a concert she attends at Heather’s school:

“Tonight we went to a concert Heather had at her school at which she had a large part—the chairperson made quite a few remarks about Heather. He said to the audience, ‘this will be your last chance to hear Miss Hewson directing her choir because in a few months she will return to the country which put on the Olympics.’ ...Then, he said how lucky the school was to have Miss Hewson, a Canadian who gave up her lunch hours to teach guitar...Then he said this was not like the American who came before her..

“...she had six of her guitar group playing for some of the songs. Then after they were announced, Heather turned around and said, ‘well, if the guitars aren’t in tune you will know why because I’m sure you heard all the guitars fall over before the program began (as indeed we did because there was a loud crash as one guitar leaned up against the back wall fell against the next guitar and the whole row of them toppled over with a resounding crash). Then she added, ‘Remember, we may not play in tune, but we play with enthusiasm,’ and they certainly did peel out “Botany Bay” with enthusiasm and even the audience ended up tapping their toes.”⁶³⁷

Updates from home

While she’s in Australia, Heather gets regular updates from Tom and others on what’s going on at home with family and friends. Like his namesake ancestors, Tom is an excellent letter writer—his observations are keen and he has a dry sense of humour.

637 Letter. Barbara Hewson to Geoff Hewson & family. August 3, 1975. P.1.

From his letters, we learn how things are on the farm in the mid '70s:

“Nov 10...The weather has been exceptionally good...Robin has been busy hauling manure. I have another 2 days spreading fertilizer and then will have all the field work done for this year...Leonard has got a job in Toronto at a Crane plumbing fixtures warehouse...I am planning to go to Vancouver next Tuesday morning. There is a 3 day tour of grain handling facilities at the coast.

“Jan 5...Still not very cold weather but a bit more snow last night. We broke a front axle on the loader tractor a week ago and the new piece came yesterday, we got it installed and Robin took the piece back to Lewises that we had borrowed. We have got the cows in by the old garden, they eat about one of Owen's stacks of straws per day...We shipped 26 steers last Sunday. David had 18 (12 steers, 6 heifers). The market was poor, 42.00 to 44.60 for ours. David's were 44.50 to 46.60 and his heifers 34.50...



Calves in the feedlot. The barn is visible on the left. The hand-stacked bales are under the hay shed on the right. 1970s.

“Cowan’s have had the snowmobile this week as Howard wanted to go for a ride on it. David was seeing if the lights worked on it and he accidently started it. The throttle stuck and it ran into the door on the house. Rosemary was most irate as he had only got the door fixed this fall after two years of prodding. David said it didn’t hurt the ski-doo but pretty well wrecked both doors. Robin says that he has never seen anyone so accident prone in his life.”

“March 28... When I got to Vancouver on Monday morning Janet [Janet Dickey Jr] met me at the airport. Later on, we went for a five mile walk all the way around Stanley Park. I was not too enthusiastic about the idea... There is a three day course the week before Easter in Saskatoon on grain marketing and I expect I shall go to that. I expect Robin and Dorothy will go to Saskatoon at Easter. I have not seen Rosemary or Amaret yet but shall go both places this week... It looks as if I shall have plenty of time to get the income tax done before the snow goes. Australia now seems like a dream.

“May 30...We got finished seeding on Friday...The crop has come up pretty well but will soon need some rain. We have most of the land seeded this year, very little summer fallow unless we work some crop up because of dryness. This makes more work at seeding and harvest and a bit less in between.



Robin uses a drill-fill auger attached to the 1977 GMC truck to get seed into the John Deere planter. Late 1970s.

“June 13...Everything is growing very fast now. We have had warm weather and thunderstorm every day or so since June 1 giving us about 3" of rain in total. Some places around have had heavy rains that ran off and filled sloughs but ours have been about right. I have been spraying and am about 2/3 done, fortunately, since we had 1" of rain last night and it will be 2 or 3 days before it dries [sic] up...

“Jim [Smyth] is selling his first imported cow at a sale near Kansas City about July 1. This is as soon as it is eligible to go into U.S. since he got it. Donald Cox has brucellosis or Bangs disease in his cows and has got permission to get rid of the whole herd. The government pays compensation so he should not be out that much. Cattle prices here are still quite low but grain prices have gone up somewhat.

“June 16...Due to rainy weather, we have not made much progress putting up silage. It has been cloudy and showery most of the time following an inch of rain last Tuesday... Jim and George Smyth and Dan Blaise are going either today or tomorrow to the sale near Kansas City where his first imported Chianina is to be sold. He said they would likely get into



Robin making silage just south of his house. Here he's probably heading in for a noon meal, made for all the men by Dorothy. Summer. Late 1970s.



Tom unloads his Massey Ferguson combine onto the 1966 Chevy truck.
The truck would be used on the farm from 1966 to 2010. Late 1970s.

Kansas City the night before the sale. The sale is July 1 at a place about 30 miles north...

“September 21...I was just over east to see the oats on Vennard’s. There are not too many sloughs nor the ground as wet as I expected. The sloughs on the summer fallow are running out as if it were spring...If we have any amount of snow this winter there will be more water around next spring than for 20 years...Shall have to see how the rest of the harvest comes off. We are better off than most people in the area and are making use of the grain dryer.

“October 26...We still need about a week before freeze up to finish cultivating, putting on Avadex (wild oat chemical) and fertilizer. The fertilizer can go on the ground after it is frozen provided there is no snow but the Avadex has to be worked in. The weather report is for winter weather starting today or tomorrow but perhaps they will be wrong...The federal gov’t has ordered companies not to increase prices more than any increased costs and has also limited pay increases to a maximum of 10% for gov’t workers and employees of large companies. Labour unions and some of the provinces don’t agree with the plan. I don’t think the plan will work and if it does will likely only delay rather than reduce inflation.”

“December 6...I haven’t got too far with my Christmas shopping as yet. Barbara and I got Nancy and Stuart new skates when they were here two weeks ago. If there is anything you want me to get for you, you might let me know.

“January 28...Barbara and I went to Regina and I got my tickets. Here are the details:...leave Regina Feb 25... leave Sydney March 22...You should find out if a contribution to a R.R.S.P. here is any good to you in reducing your taxes for 1975...There is also a scheme now for someone who does not own a house to contribute up to \$1000 per year towards saving for one and the money is tax free. This is a better deal as if a house is actually bought (and possibly sold soon after) there is a saving on income tax rather than a deferral as in R.R.S.P.’s.

“Rosemary is planning sort of a surprise birthday party for Daddy here on the 31. Ward and David have been having bad luck with Frank Gray’s cows (2 died recently) and they are most apprehensive over his next visit as they will then have to tell him. At the same time they are relieved that they were not their own...I am planning to go to the Palliser Wheat Growers Convention in Regina January 7 and 8.

Tom works hard, but he also has some leisure time. He had been to the lake and had seen *The Platters* in concert. He describes them as “supposedly famous recording stars.” He writes of the experience: “They were late and the show was short but it was pretty good.”⁶³⁸ He also sometimes babysits for brother Robin and Dorothy, looking after little Margaret.⁶³⁹

In the months before he goes to visit Heather, Tom is busy with his farm workshops, but he is looking forward to his trip:

“I have been hired to teach at it so this will be the first time I have had anyone I previously knew at the course. I expect Jerry Hoeving will be the other instructor. The course ends Feb 20 and there is a workshop for instructors on Feb 23 and 24 which makes it later than I had thought but I am still planning to go to Australia. I expect I would stay 2 to 4 weeks depending on which tours I took. I would not have to go to the workshop so could go anytime after Feb 20.”⁶⁴⁰

638 Letter. Tom Hewson to Heather Hewson. June 16, 1976. P.2.

639 Letter. Tom Hewson to Heather Hewson. December 6, 1975. P.1.

640 Letter. Geoff Hewson to Heather Hewson. October 26, 1975.

He is in Moosomin teaching, and comments on a young, newly married couple who are taking the course:

“One full week at Moosomin and not too bad a class. We have 17 if they all attend on the same day. Frank Gray and his brother-in-law, Henry, are attending, also three women. Of these the youngest (19) and her husband (18) are both attending. I suspect that if they had been married for a bit longer than a month only one of them would be coming. The class-room is in the Catholic church basement which has a hall, kitchen and meeting room which is just big enough.”⁶⁴¹

Finally in February 1976, he is taking the class on a tour of Regina and is looking forward to the course ending:

“Three more weeks to go at school and then I shall be on my way. This Friday the class is supposed to go to Regina on a tour so I may stay there for the weekend. Rosemary says I should be sure to say hello to what’s his name at the Vet Lab. We are also going to the Great Plains Auction, John Deere parts distributing, the steel mill and Carlings.

Apparently, a few of the students are looking forward to the end as well:

“One of the students suggested that we get the undertaker to give a talk on funeral arrangements, etc. some morning. We are hoping that he will bring the hearse and park it in front of the church so that any late coming students will be a little apprehensive. Some of them have been rather less than wide awake the past week or so.”⁶⁴²

At first when Tom Hewson leaves the farm, it is mostly because of farm-related business. Tom has natural skills and interests in the business and policy side of farming. He begins to keep more detailed farm records than had his father Geoff, who, like most farmers of his time, had retained only the information required to file taxes.

But Tom’s desire to travel extends well beyond the prairie horizon, and in the next two decades, he will make numerous trips abroad, visiting family in England, where in 1975, he visits the Lincolnshire Archives to glean more historical

641 Letter. Geoff Hewson to Heather Hewson. December 6, 1975.

642 Letter. Geoff Hewson to Heather Hewson. February 1, 1976.



Two pages of Tom's crowded passport from 1979-1984, showing a conglomeration of visa stamps from places such as Helsinki, London, Paris, Bangkok, Australia, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, Macau, Zambia, Kenya and New York.

information about his mariner forefathers. He then travels to Australia in the winter of 1976 and will be the last of the family members to visit Heather there.

Heather comes home

Heather returns from Australia in 1976 and stays at the farmhouse across the yard from Robin and Dorothy. She spends an active and enjoyable year at home becoming reacquainted with her nieces and nephews and meeting new ones. When Robin and Dorothy's second daughter, Jeanette, who is born in October, is very sick her first year, Heather helps the parents with older sister Margaret, spending time with her and inviting her for sleepovers:

“I stayed at the farm and looked after the house for my father and older brother, helped out babysitting my two year old niece Margaret, whose younger sister Jeanette had some health issues which were demanding of her parents' time, putting in and harvesting the garden at the farm, subbing in Regina, going to Europe and the UK; in short it was quite a busy year. And a great one!”⁶⁴³

643 Interview with Heather (Hewson) Gosselin. Hewson, Margaret. September 2021.

In the spring of 1977, Heather visits her Aunt Barbara and Uncle Harold in England for three weeks:

“I went to Europe and stayed a few days with cousin Ralph and Sheila Turvey in Geneva, Switzerland, then was in London with cousin Elizabeth and her husband Philip, and then in Meols with Aunt Barbara and Uncle Harold. They were beginning to get a little frail by then and I did quite a bit of cooking and cleaning for them. After a morning’s work cleaning the kitchen Uncle Harold said, ‘My, my, looking very smart about the sink.’

“After I got home, I talked about staying with Elizabeth and Philip to sister Rosemary. Her young daughter Jen wondered if I’d stayed with the Queen.”⁶⁴⁴



Barbara & Harold Mills with the ocean behind them, taken on “the Prom” at Meols. Late 1970s.

Chapter 34

Geoff Shocks the Family

WHILE HEATHER IS VISITING her aunt and uncle in England in 1977, Aunt Barbara receives a phone call from her brother Geoff, who delivers the outrageous news that he is engaged. The shock waves reverberate across the Atlantic and back as family on both sides of the ocean takes in the fact that, after having remained unmarried after Susan's death for nearly thirty years, the septuagenarian will again be married.

The object of his affections is Edith (Marks) Beeson, whose large family had farmed near Langbank when Edith was a child and young woman. She and Susan were the same age and had been friends at school in Langbank.

Geoff and Edith are married by a United Church minister in an outdoor wedding at Joe Yuhasz's farm⁶⁴⁵ in the afternoon of July 16, 1977:

“It was a nice sunny day. Edith's daughter Maxine and her daughter Samantha were there. Other guests included immediate family, plus Aunt Sadie and Uncle Harold and Edith's nephew Ervine and his wife Marilyn Johnston. Maybe some more Marks. We must have had something to eat, but I don't remember. Marion and Joe Yuhasz were very gracious hosts and were very pleased the wedding was there. I think Edith wore a blue dress...Later on in August we had a community event in the Kennedy

645 Formerly the Marks Farm at NE-32-12-3-W2.



Edith & Geoff Hewson's portrait. Edith Marks became the second Mrs. Geoff Hewson on July 16, 1977.

Hall. There was a program. I can't remember much of it, except that I sang. The United Church Women provided lunch."⁶⁴⁶

Edith is a spirited, charismatic character with strong opinions. Her step-daughter Heather recalled Edith's impact on others, especially Geoff:

"Edith was beautiful. She was very charming and hospitable, and people were drawn to her. She brought a great deal of colour and enjoyment to Geoff's final years. Edith really smartened Geoff sartorially, and Geoff looked elegant in a white dinner jacket. But he drew the line at wearing white shoes and absolutely refused to do so."⁶⁴⁷

As the two newest women to join the family, Edith and Dorothy develop a special bond. Dorothy describes memories of this "Gramma Hewson":

"Gramma Hewson was a nice ally to have among all the men. She was a gracious hostess. We played lots of games of cards and Scrabble with her.

⁶⁴⁶ Interview with Heather (Hewson) Gosselin. Hewson, Margaret. November 2021.

⁶⁴⁷ *ibid.*

We lived together in the same yard for over twenty years and never had a disagreement in all that time.”⁶⁴⁸

Unfortunately, three-year-old granddaughter Margaret is less thrilled with her Grampa Geoff’s new wife...at least at first:

“I was used to having my dad, uncles and grandfather to myself. Grandpa would often take me with him to check cows and go to town and that really slowed down when a new wife came along. I was precocious and jealous and told Edith that ‘I was here first,’ but I came to love her. She was a very special woman and grandmother and I spent lots of time with her. When she had enough of me at her house, she would give me “goodbye presents” which were things like empty perfume bottles.”⁶⁴⁹

Edith picks up the pen

Edith had been a schoolteacher in Ontario and British Columbia for twenty-two years and loved writing. Her writing career began in Lillooet while employed by BC editor, the legendary newspaperwoman, Ma Murray. While there, Edith spent a session in the Victoria Press gallery and in retirement, she finally has time to write books. She writes four, the first of which is published in 1971 under her previous married name, Edith Beeson. It is a true story of the first Cariboo gold strike, titled *Dunlevy: from the diaries of Alex P. McInnes*. Her second book, published in 1980 and illustrated by Jack Gravener, grandson of Fred Gravener—the long-ago frequent meal guest of Alice Cairns—is *We Swept the Cornflakes Out the Door*, describing her life as a child in early Saskatchewan. The third book also about her prairie home, *It’s a Dry Cold! You Don’t Feel It!* is published in 1997, and the fourth is *All God’s Kids* in 1998, which describes her years as a teacher.

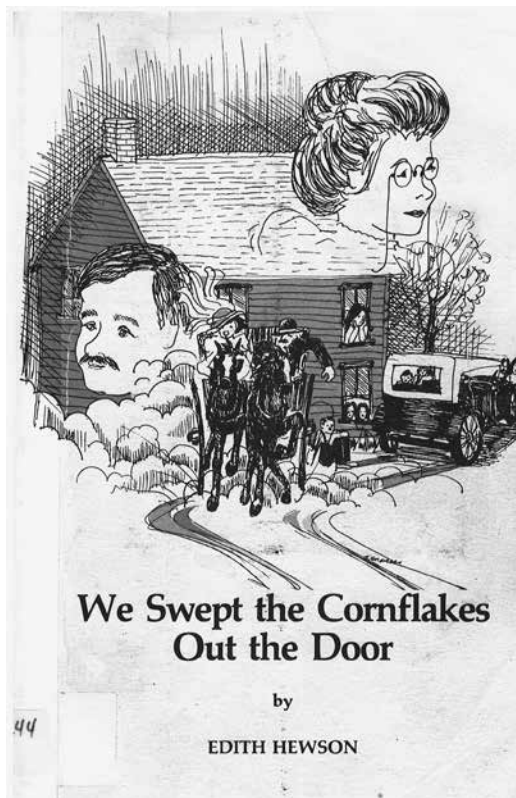
Edith would also put her writing skills to use in epic poems she writes for special family occasions. Edith is always ready for an adventure—even explosive ones. Geoff had become an active conservationist later in life, and Edith accompanies him once on a dynamiting expedition, blasting from Tisdale

648 Interview with Robin Hewson & Dorothy (Sweet) Hewson. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.

649 Interview with Margaret Hewson. Author. 2021.

to the Battlefords to create water holes for new wildlife habitats designated in areas deemed unfit for farming.

Geoff and Edith travel extensively. They trek first to England where Geoff shows off his new wife to the English relatives. Soon after they fly to a remote South Sea Island to visit Heather, who after a year at home, has had another opportunity to work abroad.



The cover of Edith's book illustrated by Jack Gravener.

Chapter 35

Papua New Guinea a Century Later

THOMAS WATERS JR. had traveled across the Indian Ocean to Papua New Guinea in 1842 as a twenty-year-old apprentice to the whaling ship *Barque Fawn*. He continued into the China seas, past the coast of Japan, and into Byron's Bay at the island Kealekekua Bay, Hawaii, where the infamous Captain Cook was killed in 1779, sixty-two years previously.

When Heather Hewson goes to Papua New Guinea in 1978, she sees the remote South Pacific Island not only in a different century, but from a very different perspective than her great-great-grandfather.

After her year at home, Heather gets another unexpected opportunity, equally exciting as her Australian adventure. She eagerly signs on to teach for three years at a Teachers College in Papua New Guinea as a Canadian University Service Overseas (CUSO)⁶⁵⁰ volunteer:

“This was a very exciting time of my life. Papua New Guinea was a tropical paradise, just 4 degrees from the equator. It was breath-takingly beautiful. The college where I was teaching was about 20 minutes up a steep

⁶⁵⁰ Cuso International. Found at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuso_International on 11/27/22. Cuso International (formerly CUSO) is a Canadian international development organization that connects communities around the world with skilled Canadians to help end poverty and inequality.



Heather in Papua New Guinea. The “lush greenery,” palm trees and “turquoise blue waters” are behind her. 1978.

hill from the town of Rabaul. I was always gob-smacked, no matter how many times I did it, with the first view of the harbour when I was driving into town. Turquoise blue water. Palm trees. Volcanic cones in the harbour. Lush tropical greenery. Beautiful flowers. And here I was, Heather Hewson, from Langbank, Saskatchewan, living amidst such natural splendor. And growing pineapples and coconut palms in my garden.

“My teaching assignment was interesting too. I was at a Catholic teachers’ college for men, run by the Christian Brothers. The first year I was there I was the only female on staff. I was teaching Music Education and did a lot of supervision of students’ practicums which meant I was out in local schools a lot.”⁶⁵¹

In a letter home to family, Heather describes her surroundings, in true Thomas Waters fashion:

“It’s raining this morning, and it looks like it will be cloudy all day, the first time that’s happened since I’ve been here. There have been three earthquakes this week, one on Thursday measured 6.5 and lasted for over thirty seconds. It’s the strangest feeling, as though the ground is rippling and you seem to keep feeling it after it’s gone. The area is all pumice so that acts as a shock absorber and there is rarely any damage, though sometimes water tanks topple over and in 1971 there was a tidal wave...

651 Interview with Heather (Hewson) Gosselin. Hewson, Margaret. November 2021.

“There is a steady stream past my place to church for Mass. Many of the people dress differently, some men wear shorts or trousers but most men and women wear laplaps, a rectangular piece of cloth that they wrap around themselves so it looks like a skirt. Sometimes the men wear shirts, sometimes not, and the women usually wear a very loose smock-type blouse with short puffy sleeves. Sometimes they don’t wear any tops either. They carry their babies in a cloth sling around their front.”⁶⁵²

Barbara’s travel legacy

Geoff and Edith visit Heather in Papua New Guinea in 1978. Papua New Guinea is a beautiful, but primitive, developing country. Heather’s friends are expats, as she is, and most work and live in rustic conditions quite different than what Geoff and Edith are used to in Canada. While there, they bravely visit other “CUSOs” who live “out in the bush.”

Tom and Barbara will follow their father to visit Heather in the South Pacific. In early 1979, Tom travels to Hong Kong and Singapore, while Heather is travelling in Indonesia and Malaysia. They decide to meet in Singapore and travel back to Papua New Guinea together. Heather remembers feeling disbelief that two farm siblings from Langbank could be meeting in such exotic locales.⁶⁵³ While there, Tom experienced snorkeling, after which he commented, “once was enough,” and also spent time learning about cattle production in the tropics at an agricultural station run by two Canadian expats.⁶⁵⁴

The intrepid Barbara travels to Papua New Guinea in 1979. While there, she travels alone on local transport up into the Highlands, a very primitive area.

The end of the 1970s and into the 1980s will see the traveling Hewsons go into high gear, with Geoff and Edith also visiting Australia, Iceland, South America, and Great Britain. Tom will also travel to Australia, Russia, Africa, and the Middle East. Barbara travels in the summers, trekking to the Himalayas, Nepal, and Tibet. Heather says:

“It was important to Barbara to experience the culture of each country she visited. She had a great interest in the people she met and loved talking

652 Letter. Heather Hewson to family. January 1978. P.1.

653 Interview with Heather (Hewson) Gosselin. Hewson, Margaret. December 8, 2021.

654 Interview with Tom Hewson. Hewson, Margaret. September 2021.



Barbara in Papua New Guinea. 1979.

to people on local busses and in the markets. As a teacher she liked to interact with children and she took pencils and other treats to give them.”⁶⁵⁵

From the mid '70s on, Barbara is a resource librarian and teacher in the Potashville School Unit working out from the Board Office in Esterhazy. She loves this job and travels out to small schools close to Esterhazy. Barbara retires from this position in 2000. Soon after retirement, she develops Parkinson's Disease which gradually worsens and eventually confines her to a care home in Kipling. Barbara dies on February 3, 2022. A former colleague of Barbara's, Judy Wilson, summed up her life beautifully in this remembrance:

“Thoughtfully and peacefully are words I would use to describe Barb's journey on this earth. She was the quiet helpful Resource teacher that suggested and provided me with numerous resources to use in the classroom. She became a frequent visitor to our house and cabin at Crooked Lake. Imagine our surprise when she quietly revealed she had skied in Innsbruck,

655 Interview with Heather (Hewson) Gosselin. Hewson, Margaret. December 8, 2021.

or listened to Ravi Shankar in India, or trekked in the Himalayas, or met Salman Rushdie in Vancouver, or received an original Alan Sapp painting. She loved the outdoors and many a wintry night was spent with us donning our x-country skis and gliding along in the moonlight as we unravelled after a taxing day at school. Thank you, Barb, for the countless hours you so selflessly gave of yourself to help others. Rest peacefully, Barb.”⁶⁵⁶

It is clear that Barbara inspired a love of travel in her family, so much so that one of her nephews had to miss her celebration of life service for that very reason, as described by niece Nancy (Smyth) Porter:

“Stuart [Smyth] recalls her giving him a subscription at a young age to National Geographic World, which he very much enjoyed. Considering he sends his regrets today as he is travelling to Bangladesh for a conference, I think Barbara got her money’s worth.”⁶⁵⁷

The Hewson nieces and nephews also benefited from all the travelling Hewsons, as niece Jeanette Hewson recalled:

“We got very cool show and tell items from our travelling aunts and uncles, from ostrich eggs or maracas to starfish and shells—very similar to what our ancestors received from the seafaring Waters families.”⁶⁵⁸

An epic global trek on the horizon

Heather’s globe-trotting continues—in the summer of 1980, she is preparing for a great adventure with four of her CUSO colleagues Dianne, Kay, Linda, and Jaro, who defected from Czechoslovakia in 1968. The trip will take from New Year’s 1981 until July that year. She describes her plans to the Smyths:

“Dear Amaret and all,
“First, thank you for all the letters, Amaret, Stuart and Nancy, it’s always nice to hear what you’re all doing. It’s quite hard to keep track of where everyone is after I’ve been away for such a long time.

656 *Remembering Barbara*. June 2022.

657 *ibid.*

658 Interview with Margaret Hewson. Author. 2021.

“...the four of us will join an overland group that goes across Asia, around Afghanistan, through Pakistan, through Iran, Turkey, Syria, Israel, dips down to Egypt, Greece, etc. It ends in London, but Linda, Dianne and I will leave in Austria and go to Czechoslovakia, to Brno, where Jaro’s family is. He can’t go or they’d keep him there. From there, I may go to Geneva, then quite directly home, maybe from Amsterdam, probably London. I should be home around the first of July next year. By the time I get there I will have been all around the world.”⁶⁵⁹

Heather comes home

Heather returns from her overseas travels to Regina in 1981 and returns to teaching. On March 26, 1988, she marries Richard Gosselin, who she had been introduced to by a mutual friend, Jack Gravener. Richard is a carpenter and



Heather & new husband Richard Gosselin on their wedding day. March 26, 1988.

659 Letter. Heather Hewson to the Smyth family (Amaret, Jim, Stuart and Nancy). August 19, 1980.

woodworker with a degree in philosophy, and Jack had recommended him to Heather when she inquired about someone to do renovation work on her house. Tall and good looking, Richard also has the travel bug and has backpacked through Europe and trekked in Nepal.

Heather and Richard enjoy travelling together and attending Regina Symphony concerts and Globe Theatre productions. They spend their domestic time enjoying their character home, gardening, and the company of their cats.

Following Heather's retirement from teaching in 2000, Heather and Richard visit Australia, Botswana and Tanzania. In 2003, Heather is overseas one more time, teaching for ten months at a small English Immersion College in Xiamen, southern China. Her students are very keen young adults and the whole teaching experience is wonderful. During this time, Richard and Heather meet in Beijing and spend four weeks travelling throughout China, where the highlight of Heather's trip is the panda sanctuary in Chengdu. Some of the students keep in touch, and even go in together to purchase Heather a ticket to China in 2020. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic closes down international travel, and the trip is not possible.

Chapter 36

The Prairie Wife Revisited: Women of the Farm

BY THE 1980S, MANY DECADES HAVE PASSED since the Rev. and Alice Cairns made their way from Canada's east coast to the prairies to blaze a trail for the future generations.

In tandem with changes to farming was the mechanization of traditionally female household tasks that had taken so much of Alice Cairns' time, such as washing clothes and dishes, cooking and cleaning the house. New technologies like electricity, household appliances and automobiles began to transform the homemaker's role by giving her time to pursue other activities, and women increasingly took up non-traditional roles:

“Women began increasing their presence in the labour market as social norms regarding gender roles evolved, new technologies such as electrical appliances reduced the time needed to perform household chores, families had fewer children and employment opportunities increased.”⁶⁶⁰

660 *The surge of women in the workforce*. Statistics Canada. Found 11/19/21 at <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-630-x/11-630-x2015009-eng.htm>.

Farm women would not only be defined by their traditional roles of raising children, managing households, and performing community service, but would also take on new roles, both in off-farm careers, and working within increasingly complex farm operations. And though Alice might be bewildered how mechanization, economic conditions and other factors were significantly changing gender roles and identities on the contemporary prairie farm, she would likely still recognize many of the functions and roles of the emerging farm woman.

Ode to the prairie farm woman

In the late 1980s, in honor of Mother's Day, Edith takes to her writing again, this time crafting a poem called *Ode to Dorothy on Mother's Day*, which she presents as a gift to her daughter-in-law.⁶⁶¹

Though much has changed in the century for women on the farm, many things are the same, as Edith's words show:

Ode to Dorothy on Mother's Day

She doesn't linger in bed to hear the alarm –
She's up with the birds on a prairie farm.
There's lunches to make for two or three kids,
And she's making the porridge while closing the lids.

Then there's breakfast and bundling the kids on the bus
And she's into the scrubbing and washing and muss.
She does all her housework, each job in a trice
So by noon she's all finished; all things looking nice.

But hold on a moment—
That's true if no phone calls her into
activity not here at home.
She is often on call to sub at the school,
Or perhaps take a carload of kids to the pool.

When winter arrives with its ice and its snow,
No rest she gets here for it's go, go, go, go!

661 The poem is also later printed in Edith's book, *It's a Dry Cold...You Don't Feel It!*



Dorothy takes on a new role, cow-milking. Here she milks “Daisy,” her Chianina cross milk cow purchased from brother-in-law Jim Smyth. 1986.

One kid goes to music and one to the rink
And one to the 4-H’ers—That’s enough don’t you think?

To keep mothers busy with no time to spare
But the work she’s expected to do—Is it fair?
Many times in a month it’s not thought to be rude
To ask her to make great slathers of food.

For unions or Lions, or big local dinners—
“It’s money for church,” she says. (For us sinners?)
Then spring comes along and she’s hoeing and seeding—
“It helps with the money for family feeding.”

Then of course in the spring, is she busy?? Not half!!
She is often required to help pull a calf?
Well, maybe you think she’ll have fun when it’s summer.
As often as not, it’s really a bummer.

In dry years she struggles with hoses and pipes
To water her garden and help it get ripe.
The days are oft filled with friends from the city
And feeding and weeding—it does seem a pity

She hasn't much time for smelling the flowers
Which she grows round the house. How she hopes for
Those showers!

When autumn arrives she is busy as bees,
Digging carrots and cukes and shelling the peas
And freezing and jarring the fruits of her pains
Which she does with great pride and just sees the gains.

She's frequently off to teach Sunday school
Or serve on a board for C.U. or the pool.

There's dozens of things I've forgotten to mention—
This space is too short to list every intention.
She's a wonder, a worker, a giver of life,
So hats off to you, the Great Prairie Wife!

The list of roles for women is—and, arguably, always has been—endless. Going forward, two more women join the Hewson family, and continue to add to that list.

Later-life weddings

Leonard meets Rose-Marie Brunskill, who has four adult children, in 1977 when he is forty. Leonard recalls that meeting at Alec McLeod's Kenosee Lake cabin:

“I always had health problems and was not very active. Mr. McLeod was an original homesteader in the Langbank district where he raised a large family. Not all the first generation McLeods stayed on the farm. Alec McLeod had a house in Regina and a summer cottage at Kenosee Lake. His nephews from Langbank were always welcome to visit either place. After Robert and Murray were married and not visiting their uncle as much, I gradually became the adopted nephew... In the summer of 1977 I was still living with Daddy and Edith in the house on the farm when Alec and his



ABOVE: Leonard driving Tulip & Bergy (head cut off) pulling a sleigh full of children at the Langbank Rec Board's Santa Claus Day. Early 1980s.

LEFT: Leonard & Rose-Marie Hewson. 1981.

wife arranged for me to bring a widow to visit them at the cottage on my way back to the farm after an appointment in Regina.”⁶⁶²

It is love at first sight. In 1980, Leonard buys his own farmhouse which became available when Russel Twells sells out and retires from farming. Then on June 6, 1981, Leonard marries Rose-Marie and she moves to their house at the farm. The Scottish born Rose-Marie who loves gardening, cooking, and sewing, creates a homey environment for Leonard. Rose-Marie takes well to farm life.

Some of her grown-up children and grandchildren continue to live in her house in Regina for a few more years and are frequent visitors to the farm at Christmas and other gatherings, where Leonard often offers memorable sleigh rides pulled by his team of horses, Tulip and Bergy.

Tom & Mary

Tom meets Mary Szczesny on an Alaskan tour in the summer of 1986. Mary is a big-city woman in her mid-forties, having lived most of her pre-Saskatchewan life in Toronto and Montreal where she was a computer programmer and systems analyst. She takes a bus trip to the Yukon and Alaska, meets Tom and “the next thing I knew I was here in Saskatchewan.”⁶⁶³

662 Interview with Leonard Hewson. Hewson, Margaret. 2021.

663 Interview with Tom & Mary (Szczesny) Hewson. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.

Mary had come about her computing career inadvertently. Attending the University of Toronto and unsure what she wanted to do, Mary thought that teaching and accounting would be her only options. . .neither of which interested her. At the same time, “the university opened up computer classes as extras for anyone who wanted them, so I took one and found out I was good at them, so I decided to take a post-graduate year and it turned out I was really good at it. I’m so glad I accidentally fell into that career.”⁶⁶⁴

Her first job was with Dominion Bridge. Jobs were easy to get; she interviewed with six companies and got offers from five of them. She learned how to read the computer language:

“That was fun because you really got to understand what went on inside the computer and I found out I didn’t like routine, so I always got the jobs where you had to go in and solve a problem and come out again, and then go onto the next thing.”⁶⁶⁵

In the fall of 1986, Mary visits Tom in Saskatchewan on the Labour Day weekend. The day the reticent forty-eight-year-old Tom goes to the Regina airport to pick Mary up, he tells his nieces he is going to pick up his girlfriend. Niece Jeanette Hewson recalled:

“Naturally, we think he is joking. Our uncle has been a bachelor for a long time and he hadn’t told us of any blooming romance. It wasn’t until we actually met Mary that we believed him.”⁶⁶⁶

For her part, Mary knew that she would be “news” among her boyfriend’s family: “Tom introduced me to all his siblings, who all played it very calm and cool, but I knew full well the phone lines must have been buzzing after the visits!”⁶⁶⁷

One day during this visit, while Dorothy is away, Mary is left in charge of preparing a meal for the harvesting men. Mary is unaware that casseroles are unpopular, but the large amount of leftover food tells the tale. To add insult to injury, Mary puts the extra food outside for the dog which sniffs at it and then turns up its nose too.

664 *ibid.*

665 *ibid.*

666 Interview with Jeanette Hewson. Hewson, Margaret. 2021.

667 Interview with Tom & Mary (Szczesny) Hewson. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.



Tom & new wife Mary Hewson. 1988.

Tom and Mary are married at Toronto City Hall on December 16, 1986. Geoff and Edith come for the wedding, as does Edith's daughter Maxine and her family who live nearby. Mary purposely chooses a mid-week wedding day so that there isn't a crowd of people to overwhelm the quiet Tom. They build a house on NW-22-13-2-W2 in 1987.

Mary knows that she will probably have to work hard to make a place for herself in the close-knit prairie community, and she does. She quickly joins community organizations both in Langbank and the surrounding communities, such as a drama club in Kipling (no, Hollywood did not call her). Life was very different in Saskatchewan compared to Toronto, and Mary adjusts her life accordingly:

"There was a lot going on in the communities, so I met a lot of people. I also went to the other local towns to meet people. Everyone was friendly, I knew more people to talk to, and say hello to, than in the city... The

length of time to drive anywhere was about the length of time it took to get out of a parking lot in Toronto!”⁶⁶⁸

Tom and Mary travel extensively, taking many cruises during the long Saskatchewan winters. In 2001 they visit South America and see the area where Grandfather Captain Frank Hewson was shipwrecked with *Crown of Italy*, and they visit Heather in China in 2003.

Mary helps computerize the farm

A new level of business sophistication was achieved with computerization of farm data and records. Because of her knowledge of computers and accounting, Mary can take on computerizing and maintaining the Hewson farm books. She helps other farm women learn as well:

“Because I had the background, I was able to help a lot of local ladies learn both bookkeeping and how to use a computer. The women picked it up quickly.”⁶⁶⁹

Heather describes other teaching that Mary did in the community, helping farm women in particular increase their business skills and experience so they could play a new role in their family farm operations:

“At Langbank Mary generously shared her computer knowledge and bookkeeping skills, volunteering at a time when computers were beginning to have a huge impact on our lives. She also taught bookkeeping, accounting and public speaking for several years at the Adult Learning Centre in Regina. She was a great asset to the community.”⁶⁷⁰

There are more Hewson women than ever now, each of whom will contribute in unique ways to the family and community.⁶⁷¹

668 *ibid.*

669 *ibid.*

670 Interview with Heather (Hewson) Gosselin. Hewson, Margaret. 2021.

671 *The surge of women in the workforce*. Statistics Canada. Found 11/19/21 at <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-630-x/11-630-x2015009-eng.htm>.

Chapter 37

Lives Well Lived

IN DECEMBER 1989, friends and relatives of the Hewson clan gather at the Hewson farm to celebrate a historic event: the seventieth anniversary of Geoff Hewson's arrival in Canada. It is a way to acknowledge the past, and to celebrate how far the families had all come since Geoff arrived in Canada on December 4, 1919.

It is a good time to look ahead, and to look back. As Geoff and Edith Hewson, Sadie and Harold Cox, Owen and Hilda Cairns and Amy Reynolds, among others, are aging, they document their own experiences creating another generation of written family history.

In the early 1980s, they all write and contribute to a major community history book project, *Langbank Memories*. With the assistance of Chris Evans, Harold Cox writes his *Recollections*, and Amy Reynolds drafts the delightfully colourful and detailed *5 Dickey Birds* memoir. In 1987, Sheila Turvey sadly passes away from leukemia, and her children, Nicholas and Amanda, would eventually publish the extensive research and narrative she had completed. Her work on the Waters and Turveys would be extensively used in the book.

Thankfully these memories were recorded before the sunset of this generation, which happens in the next two decades. This includes the four remaining Dickey Birds and their husbands: Janet (d. July 25, 2001); Amy (d. February 7, 1989) and Walter Reynolds (d. February 17, 1988); Sadie (d. December 17, 1992) and Harold Cox (d. August 28, 2001), and Elizabeth (d. November 11, 2008) and Ross Evans (d. May 4, 2013).



Three generations of Hewson family and friends, which includes all of Geoff Hewson Sr.'s descendants in Canada at the time. Back Row, L to R: Richard Gosselin, Owen Cairns, Jim Smyth, Leonard Hewson, Amaret Smyth, Dorothy Hewson, Rosemary Cowan, Barbara (with Robin Hewson behind her), Stuart & Lanette Smyth, Thomas & Mary Hewson, Heather Gosselin, Godfrey Reynolds. Middle Row, L to R: Hilda Cairns, Sadie Cox, Edith & Geoffrey Hewson Sr., Harold Cox, Chris Reynolds, Dave Cowan (kneeling). Front Row, L to R: Jennifer Cowan (with Mark Cowan on lap), Geoffrey Jr., Margaret & Jeanette Hewson, Merodee Cowan, Nancy Smyth. December 1989.

The family also says goodbye to Owen (d. May 16, 1993) and Hilda (d. November 19, 2010) Cairns and, across the Atlantic, Barbara (d. October 28, 1979) and Harold (d. November 1995) Mills and Norman (d. January 1975) and Jack (d. June 15, 1987) Turvey.

But there was one man who outlived nearly all of them...and he would live to pass the century mark.

As short as his first wife Susan's life was, Geoff Hewson's life is the opposite.

On December 31, 2002, a gala event is held for Geoff's one-hundredth birthday, where many people gather to celebrate at the Willowdale Lodge in Kipling, Saskatchewan.

Old-time music is provided by Fred Easton, Gerald Easton, and Gordon McClement. Tom Hewson is master of ceremonies. Addresses were given by

local politicians, M.P. Roy Bailey and M.L.A. Don Toth. RM Councillor Jim Cairns, a long-time family friend, neighbour and cousin, says:

“[It’s] A great honour for me to be here today... to bring 100th birthday wishes... to a man you can call your family’s best friend and best neighbour for over 80 years is indeed both an honour and a pleasure. Geoff, you were those things through all your years working for and with our family... Geoff told me one of his most vivid memories of coming to Canada was coming over the hill, a mile south of our place, Cairnbank Farm... that’s a wonderful memory for me to know that. ... on behalf of the Cairns family from all over western Canada, I bring you greetings and best wishes on your 100th birthday. I was asked to bring greetings from the RM of Silverwood, and I thought about it, I thought about talking about a job well done and about community service. The only thing that kept coming back in my mind, was Geoff, you spent 20 twenty years on council and still you were able to reach 100 years of age! What an accomplishment! Congratulations from the Reeve and Council of the RM of Silverwood.”



An elderly Geoff Hewson relaxing in his living room with Heather's cats Maude & Max. Undated.

Daughter Heather sings *Whispering Hope* one last time for her father, Geoff's seven children then sing *Happy Birthday* to him, and Rosemary Cowan and Thomas Hewson make final comments.

One of the highlights of the party is a new creative work by Geoff's writerly wife, Edith. Edith has penned a poem that provides a detailed rhyming view of Geoff's long and fruitful life, which she reads aloud. She describes meeting him when they were young, with his "odd English voice," and his inability to dance. And she respectfully acknowledges the great love of his life: "He wasn't for me," she writes, "but Susan fell in love," and "Geoff was broken when Susan died."⁶⁷²

Geoffrey Hewson passes on

Edith and Geoff are together for thirty years, until Geoff's death on January 2, 2005, at the venerable age of 102. Geoff is buried with Susan in the little stone church graveyard more than a half-century after her death.

In addition to having been the father of a large family, Geoff Hewson played many roles during his long life. He was a husband, then a widower, then a husband again. He was a caring son who wrote his mother a letter every Sunday. He was an immigrant who moved across the world to follow his dreams. He was a farmer, community volunteer, traveller, naturalist, and hunter. He was a pragmatist who carried on when the going got tough. He had a zest for life and an interest in everyone and everything around him. He will long be remembered.



The Hewson headstone in St. Paul's Anglican Church graveyard. Geoff is buried with Susan more than a half century after her death.

672 Edith's entire epic poem of Geoff's life can be found at www.mywatersfamily.com.

The eulogy

GEOFFREY MARK HEWSON DECEMBER 31, 1902—JANUARY 2, 2005

Eulogy prepared and delivered by Rosemary Cowan on January 6, 2005

“We are so grateful that you are able to be with us today as we remember and celebrate the life of our father, Geoffrey Mark Hewson. In my eyes he was a wonderful man and a dear father. With deep regret, his grandsons Stuart, Geoffrey and Mark are unable to be here due to weather conditions.

“As I was growing up I many times witnessed my father’s honesty, integrity, compassion, diligence and willingness to lend a helping hand. The practice of Christian morals was very evident in his life. Our home was always open and if anyone arrived at meal time it was only natural for them to stay and eat—even to the point of the time when Doug Dansock, the municipal foreman, arrived at breakfast time one morning and was offered a bowl of Daddy’s homemade porridge. Doug declined!

“Geoffrey Mark Hewson was born at Birkenhead, Cheshire, England on December 31, 1902, the second of three children born to Frank and Amaret Hewson. Although his father was a sea captain, Geoff knew from an early age that he wanted to follow an agricultural career. As a teenager attending Penketh Boarding School he worked on a friend’s farm during the summer holidays. At the age of 16, in December 1919, he came to Canada to live with his mother’s cousin Alice and her husband, the Rev. John Cairns of Langbank, in order to learn how to be a farmer. Geoff remained at Cairnbank for ten years during which time he purchased his first half section of land.

“1931 Geoff married Susan Dickey of the Poplar Grove district and in 1934 they moved into a new house they had built which was to be Geoff’s home for the next 64 years. He and Susan became the parents of seven children before Susan’s sudden death in 1949. Geoff was a responsible and caring father and continued to raise his family with the assistance of loving grandparents, aunts, uncles and excellent housekeepers.

“Geoff was a long time supporter of the Co-operative movement in Saskatchewan. He served on the Board of the Langbank Co-op Association for 38 years, 34 of those years as Chairman. He was also Chairman of the local Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Committee for over 30 years and received

a 50 year Wheat Pool Membership Plaque. Geoff was a councillor for the R.M. of Silverwood for 21 years. The meetings were always held on a Saturday afternoon.

“Late one Saturday morning Daddy came rushing in from the field to get ready to go to the meeting when Horton Dean arrived with a concern for the meeting. Being in such a rush our dad did not have time to sit down with him but invited Horton into the bathroom to discuss the matter while Daddy was having a bath. Horton could sit on the toilet! Horton promptly replied that he had talked to many people in many different places, but he was not going to accept this invitation!

“Other interests of Geoff included The United Church of Canada, the Woodside School Board, the local Telephone Exchange, the Hudson’s Bay Route Association and Ducks Unlimited. Nature was Geoff’s joy and his knowledge of the plant and animal life in Saskatchewan was immense. Many a time as we would be walking, riding horseback or travelling somewhere Daddy would share with us some nature tidbit. Hunting and trapping were favourite activities for Geoff. Our dad was always very pleased when we brought home roadkill—whether it be for bait or pelt. Even Dave scored points here before we were married!

“As a young man he became interested in working with dynamite. This supplemented the farm income and provided an interesting hobby. At first most dynamiting jobs involved the removal of large rocks and tree stumps. Later he used dynamite to blast beaver dams, to create dugouts and water holes, to clear water ways, dig graves and to demolish old buildings, in jobs that saw him travelling to many parts of Saskatchewan. At one time his business card read, “Have Dynamite. Will Travel”. We could go on for hours with blasting stories—such as the time he was blasting in Janet and Jerry Kessler’s basement and he said to Jerry—“Now, there will be a dull thud”—and the next moment a loud bang and the dishes fell out of the cupboard.

“Geoff was an avid reader and a dedicated letter writer. He and his parents and then his sister exchanged weekly letters for as long as they lived. Whenever any of his children were living away from the Langbank area he also wrote to each of them every Sunday, and he expected a weekly reply. Much of the history of our community was recorded in those letters.

“One Sunday afternoon in 1977—Geoff would be in his mid 70’s—Daddy arrived at our (Dave and my) place in his truck in bib overalls after checking cattle. He seemed to be very excited as he jumped out of his truck and rushed into our house. He stopped for a moment and then said “Oh!” and left again. Edith, well dressed as she always is, was with him and in his excitement she had been left sitting in the truck. He was very proud of you Edith. July 16, 1977 Geoff and Edith were married having a garden wedding at the home of Joe and Marion Yuhasz, that being the childhood home of Edith then Marks. Edith, you brought our dad much joy and have been a loving companion to him for over 27 years. Thank you for blessing him. Geoff and Edith enjoyed many trips together.

“It seemed that Geoff’s most enjoyable trips were the ones when he took Edith on some of his dynamiting expeditions. We remember when he took her to the Moose Mountain Provincial Park and had Edith walk in 3½ km carrying explosives! A favourite saying of Geoff’s was “I love to mix business with pleasure!”

“Although suffering from glaucoma, Geoff remained active well into his nineties, and he and Edith enjoyed many holidays together in such places as Papua New Guinea, South America, Australia and Great Britain. His love for Canada was unquestionable and he often said there was no place like Canada—especially Langbank.

“In 1999 Geoff and Edith retired to the town of Kipling, and in March 2001 failing health necessitated a move to the Willowdale Lodge where he was cared for in a most compassionate and capable manner until his death on January 2 at 102 years and 2 days. Thank you to the Staff of Willowdale for your excellent, compassionate care. What a blessing you have been.

“As I was preparing the eulogy I couldn’t help but remember the years that our dad farmed back and forth with Bob Cairns, Owen Cairns and Harold Cox. Many memories there, too. What high regard he had for those men. I thought of his travels with Hugh Kidd to Australia and Europe; of his travels and stories with Martin Rupert, his visits with Tom and Dave Blackwood, his great respect for Bill West and Bill’s work ethic.

“It is absolutely impossible to even highlight Geoff’s life in ten minutes as he was such an innovative person and farmer. He was the man who hooked his tractor to the magazine (the magazine was a specially built building

on skids to store dynamite—and it was full!)—going this way and that dodging a runaway fire that changed directions every time the wind did. What excitement! He was one of the first to farm using a combine (owned by Bob Cairns), to grow rapeseed in wartime for fuel for the marine engines, to use a wind charger for electricity, and then later attach a TV antenna to the windmill so he could watch TV in the fifties. He also used a four wheel drive jeep in the fifties because of the wet years and five muddy roads. He owned an all terrain vehicle and was one of the first to purchase a ski-doo. I believe he was also the first man to have ridden a runaway self propelled swather that had no brakes through the Pipestone valley.

“He was in his seventies when he first encountered waterslides and he tried them too. Each one of us has our own memories—many they are. Geoff is survived by his wife Edith and her daughter Maxine and family.⁶⁷³ He is survived by his children—Amaret (Jim), Barbara, Thomas (Mary), Leonard (Rose-Marie), Robin (Dorothy), Heather (Richard) and Rosemary (David) and their families. From Daddy’s loins came eight grandchildren and twelve greatgrandchildren. He is survived by one sister-in-law, Elizabeth and husband Ross Evans, and nieces and nephews.

“Last Sunday afternoon as we were sitting with our dad it seemed that heaven opened up and the Lord said, “Come home.” It was about that time that Edith said, “I can’t help but think Susan is just on the other side waiting for Geoff.” He stopped breathing about an hour later.

“I Timothy 6:12 says ‘Fight the good fight of faith’ and that is exactly what our dad did. He will be sorely missed.”

673 Following her husband’s death, Edith Hewson would move back to British Columbia, marry again and die on March 18 2010, in Comox at the age of ninety-eight.

Chapter 38

Constant Change

AS THOMAS AND ROBIN ENTER THEIR FOURTH DECADE of farming in the late 1980s, the world is changing rapidly, the result of incredible leaps in technology in everything from computers to communications and the opening of national economies.

On the farm, technology was advancing just as rapidly. From equipment to global positioning systems to plant breeding techniques, the advances pick up speed as the millennium approaches. In tandem with technological innovation, a new era of global agricultural trade liberalization emerges. Women becoming increasingly involved. And the Hewson brothers are there, encouraging and embracing it all.

Another family member will become deeply involved with agricultural innovation. He is Stuart Smyth, Geoff Hewson's grandson and Amaret (Hewson) Smyth's son. Dr. Smyth is an Associate Professor in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at the University of Saskatchewan, where he also holds the Agri-Food Innovation and Sustainability Enhancement Chair. His research focuses on sustainability, agriculture, innovation, and food.

Stuart sums up the changes:

“Since the decade of the 1980s, agriculture has experienced more change, and at a more rapid pace, than any other sector of the economy. Innovations in equipment, digital technologies, telecommunications, plant breeding genomics and crop chemistry have revolutionized farming.”⁶⁷⁴

Zero till fights drought

Farmers have always been inventors and innovators because they've had to be. If a piece of equipment breaks down in the middle of seeding or harvesting, it must be fixed, or a creative work-around found. The stories of prairie farm problem-solving and invention are legendary.

In Saskatchewan, one of the greatest challenges was how to sustain moisture and soil in the arid climate. In the 1980s, drought, wind erosion, thin farming margins and a desire to conserve moisture and soil drove significant innovations.

As the millennium approaches, zero till becomes an obtainable goal, due primarily to two inventions: herbicide tolerant crops, which don't require tillage to control weeds, and air seeding systems developed in the prairies, such as Langbank-based Seed Hawk.

In an early 2000s *Winter Cereals* information sheet, Tom and Robin Hewson are profiled and they describe this in their own words:

“In the early days [the mid-'80s], the equipment was limited, but our International 7200 hoe drill did well to get through the trash and stubble.” Robin added, “Our land was quite eroded”. “Zero till or direct seeding, didn't become popular until about the early 1990s. The thing that seemed to make it possible was Roundup herbicide to kill broadleaf weeds instead of depending on tillage plus the development of zero till drills, like the Beaujot's Seed Hawk.”⁶⁷⁵

As well-known former University of Saskatchewan Agriculture Professor Les Henry writes,

“...the zero till part of our current cropping systems was almost completely driven by individual farmers tinkering in their shops...the story is a Prairie story of ingenuity and initiative.”⁶⁷⁶

Geoff Hewson's granddaughter (Robin and Dorothy's eldest child) Margaret would later reflect on the significance of zero till to their farming operation and her memories as a child before zero till in a 2014 blog post:

675 *Producer Profile*. Winter Cereals Canada information sheet. Undated.

676 *Revolution Started in Farm Shops*. Henry, Les. *Grainnews*. December 7, 2009. Found 11/13/21 at <https://www.grainnews.ca/columns/revolution-started-in-farm-shops/>.



The Producers...

Langbank, SK area brothers **TOM** and **ROBIN HEWSON** have been farming together since about 1960. They work an Oxbow clay loam in the black soil zone. Their land contains pockets of bush and several sloughs. Tom is married to Mary. Robin is married to Dorothy and has three children.

Winter Cereals featuring farming brothers Robin & Thomas Hewson. Early 2000s.

“My grandfather made his livelihood from this land and now I do, but while he tilled the land, I use zero till. Zero-till is a system that plants seeds into the previous year’s stubble without disturbing the soil. Weeds are controlled with herbicides that kill weeds but don’t damage the crops. Tillage used to be necessary to control weeds but it also left the soil exposed to wind erosion. I remember when I was a child and on windy days the skies turned black as the soil blew. Now the soil is rarely tilled and this has virtually eliminated soil erosion. Zero till has also improved our land by increasing the organic matter, allowing for more active soil biota and better moisture retention. As a result, the land is more productive than when my grandfather farmed it!”⁶⁷⁷

The Hewsons are early adopters of zero till, as they are of yet another prairie invention: canola.

⁶⁷⁷ *Reflecting on agriculture's evolution. Crop Life Blog.* Hewson, Margaret. August 15, 2014.



Canola at the Hewson Farm in 1995. Top: The John Deere 9600 combine unloads canola onto the farm's first tandem axle grain truck. Bottom: The combine picks up canola swathes.

The new crop that changes everything

Developed from rapeseed by prairie plant breeders and introduced in the 1970s, canola was a revolutionary crop welcomed by Saskatchewan famers.⁶⁷⁸ Though it wouldn't really take off until the 1990s, the Hewsons are early adopters of the new crop. Tom describes how the Hewsons are introduced to canola:

“I remember getting hints from Andrew Bruce in the mid '70s who had been growing it for a couple of years. I remember visiting with him one time and he spent an hour or two telling me about his experience growing canola, gave me some very good advice. So, from that time on it became part of the rotation and was quite profitable some years.”⁶⁷⁹

678 *A Brief History of Agriculture in Saskatchewan*. Bitner, Ruth. P.3. Saskatchewan Western Development Museum. February 2010. For more; www.wdm.ca.

679 Interview with Tom Hewson. Hewson, Margaret. August 2019.

In 1995, the first two genetically modified (GM) herbicide tolerant varieties of canola are approved in Canada. This approval is a huge step for farmers because it allows effective control of the water- and nutrient-stealing weeds that are otherwise hard to control in canola.

Margaret describes how canola continues to be very successful today and is increasingly significant for the Hewsons:

“We still grow wheat, barley and oats, but the amount of canola we grow has increased over the years. Canola, with its heart healthy properties has been a success story for our farm. In the nineties, herbicide resistant canola was developed through biotechnology and we immediately began to grow those varieties. Herbicides are important for controlling weeds in a zero-till system and until herbicide resistant canola was developed, it was expensive and difficult to control weeds in canola. Herbicide resistant canola worked well with the zero till system and created a high value crop to include in our rotation.”⁶⁸⁰

The technological triad

In 2020, Stuart Smyth describes the benefits to the agriculture industry of the technology triad of a genetically modified crop, weed control and zero till:

“The adoption of GM canola was the most rapid adoption of any innovation in the history of agriculture, as GM canola was produced on just over 10% of acres in 1997, 55% in 1999, 80% by 2005 and over 90% in 2008... The improvement of chemical weed control allowed farmers to gradually reduce their use of tillage as the leading form of weed control.”⁶⁸¹

“Quite possibly the most significant benefit of GM canola can be observed by driving down virtually any country road in Western Canada on a windy summer day. Driving down this road 30 years ago, one would have experienced dust constantly blowing across the road due to the presence of summerfallow fields. Today, dust blowing across rural roads is virtually a thing of the past as GM canola has precipitated the move to zero tillage

680 *Reflecting on agriculture's evolution. Crop Life* blog. Hewson, Margaret. August 15, 2014.

681 The latest version of this survey shows that this is now 99%. Interview with Stuart Smyth. Hewson, Margaret. December 12, 2021.

land management practices. It is very satisfying to be able to observe the sustainability of GM canola simply by taking a scenic drive down a country road on a summer day.”⁶⁸²

All this agricultural innovation coincides at the millennium with the liberalization and expansion of secure access, rules-based trade between Canada and other countries around the world. From the mid-1980s, Canada had been on its way to developing a free trade deal with the United States. Meanwhile, many western Canadian farmers had for decades felt shackled from free trade by the monopoly of the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB).

Their opposition grows stronger in the face of free trade summits in the 2000s. The Hewsons are firmly in the camp of these farmers. Robin’s son, Geoff Hewson Jr., is a director of the Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association (WCWGA) and Tom Hewson is active in the Western Canadian Barley Growers Association (WCBGA). As its vice-president in 2006, Tom writes this pro-trade letter to the *Regina Leader Post* protesting the CWB’s hold on western Canadian wheat and barley growers:

“The trade issue is being neglected in the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) debate. Lack of progress in World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations may be a reason. Prairie farmers who depend on export markets will be losers if we give in to protectionists.

“Single-desk supporters usually say they are not protectionist. They say they are only trying to get us a fair deal in response to protectionist activities by others, especially the United States and the European Union. Farmers in those countries see the monopoly aspects of the Canadian Wheat Board as an unfair trade activity by Canada. They see it as protectionism.

“Prairie farmers are in a much different position to our U.S. neighbours. Like farmers in Australia and Argentina, we depend on export markets. Tariffs, subsidies and trade restrictions hamper our ability to trade. It is in our best interests to see trade restrictions reduced.

“Farmers have reason to be undecided about single-desk marketing. So many issues appear to be involved. Possible benefits to a group versus

682 *The dawning of a new era in ag sustainability*. Smyth, Stuart. *Sustainable Agricultural Innovation & Food*. Found November 29, 2021 at <https://saifood.ca/25th-anniversary-gm-canada/>.

individual rights and freedom is one issue. Academics telling us how much poorer we will be without the monopoly when we see higher prices just across the border is another issue.

“We cannot ignore trade implications when we decide how to vote on wheat or barley marketing. Support for the single-desk plays into the hands of those who would build and maintain trade barriers along our borders.”⁶⁸³

Five years later, Tom writes this letter to the editor, which is published in the agriculture trade magazine, *Western Producer*:

“The Canadian Wheat Board continues to tell prairie wheat and barley growers how much money we will lose if we allow Canada to sign on to a new World Trade Organization agreement.

“It claims that the powers and privileges that the board receives from our government put more money into farmers’ pockets.

“They say these perks would likely be lost under a new agreement. There is another side to the story.

“Producers of non-board grains, oilseeds, pulses and livestock have much to gain from reduced trade barriers. So too do our resource industries and some manufacturers and service providers. Canada stands alone, with the exception of New Zealand kiwi fruit growers, in trying to maintain the board as a state trading entity. Times have changed.

“Even those who feel that the board is a net benefit to them can look at the other side of the equation. All of us, and especially consumers and taxpayers, pay a price for protectionism.

“A new WTO agreement may not be attainable immediately but working toward one is better for prairie farmers than working against one.”⁶⁸⁴

Freedom for farmers...finally

On December 16, 2011, at a farm east of Regina, Tom, Geoff Jr., and Margaret Hewson join a large group of farmers at a press conference to mark the removal of the single-desk marketing system by royal assent on the previous day. Farmers

683 Letter to the Editor. Hewson, Thomas. *Regina Leader Post*. Dec 7, 2006.

684 Letter to the Editor. Hewson, Thomas. *The Western Producer*. Feb 23, 2011.

would now have the choice to market their grain as they saw fit. It is a day many believed would never happen. Margaret remembers:

“It was an electric atmosphere. I will never forget the disbelief that this was actually happening. None of us were in attendance at the August 1, 2012, event,⁶⁸⁵ because we were at home harvesting our first open market winter wheat crop!”⁶⁸⁶

It was even more surprising because federal Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz has gambled with a doubling-down strategy that seems risky to many.

“We were pleasantly surprised when they included wheat as well as barley,” says Blair Rutter.⁶⁸⁷ “We had thought they would do it in a two-step exercise, but we were really, really happy when Ritz took the bit between his teeth and decided to go full steam ahead with both.”⁶⁸⁸

The fact that WCBGA and WCWGA had worked together was “instrumental” to the final outcome, as Ritz describes:

“...these guys held it all together while we were working through the legalities of making the changes. It was trench warfare. We just stayed solid. I just idolized those guys.”⁶⁸⁹

Tom as the Vice President of the WCBGA and Geoff as a director with the WCWGA were representative of that collaboration within the Hewson family. Geoff remembered how valuable the whole exercise was to the industry, and to him:

“Many people worked together to accomplish a thing greater than anyone could do alone. Not only was marketing freedom achieved, but the relationships developed during the process were of great benefit to me as an individual.”⁶⁹⁰

685 *Marketing Freedom Day. Warriors for Wheat*. Author. 2020. P. 102. The day that became colloquially known as “Marketing Freedom Day” in Canada...the first day farmers were allowed to trade their grain on the open market. An event was held at the Walde farm at Kindersley. More than 800 farmers, their families and politicians showed up to celebrate and hear the Prime Minister and Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz.

686 Interview with Margaret Hewson. Author. December 1, 2021.

687 Rutter was Executive Director of (WCWGA) at the time.

688 *Marketing Freedom Day. Warriors for Wheat*. Author. 2020. P. 94.

689 *ibid.* P. 95.

690 Interview with Geoff Hewson. Hewson, Margaret. November 2021.

Women in agriculture

Another, much quieter, agriculture trend of the new millennium is an increasing number of women involved in agriculture. As Stuart Smyth notes:

“One of the most dramatic changes I’ve seen in agriculture at the U of S is the high number of female students today, compared to the class photos that adorn the hallways. Class photos from the late 1970s and well into the 1980s show a handful of female students at most, definitely less than 10% of the total class size. For the past few years, the graduating classes from the College of Agriculture and Bioresources have been over 50% female.”⁶⁹¹

Two of those women were Geoff Hewson’s granddaughter, Margaret Hewson, and his great granddaughter, Deanna (Bruce) Taylor, both of whom receive a B.Sc. Ag. from the University of Saskatchewan. After acquiring her degree with a major in soil science, and a period spent working in the environmental industry, Margaret returns to the Hewson farm in the early 2000s and becomes an active partner. She follows in her Uncle Tom’s footsteps, also becoming a pro-trade voice and a vice-president of the WCWGA. As such, she advocates to the Canadian government urging the expansion of free trade and ratification of the Trans-Pacific Partnership on behalf of western Canadian farmers.

Margaret is invited to represent the Grain Growers of Canada at the June 2, 2016, meeting of Canada’s Standing Committee on International Trade, as the federal government is facing decisions surrounding ratification of the Trans-Pacific Partnership:

“Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for the invitation to appear today.

“The Grain Growers of Canada strongly support the ratification of the TPP agreement by Canada, and we would like to tell you why from the perspective of the individual farmer.

“Our organization acts as a national voice for over 50,000 farmers from across Canada who actively grow and care for a variety of crops, including wheat, durum, barley, canola, oats, corn, soybean, peas, and lentils. We do this by bringing together provincial and regional grower groups to

691 *View from the Ranch Porch*. Smyth, Stuart. October 11, 2017. Found 12/4/21 at <https://saifood.ca/communicating-with-farmers/>.



Margaret, active in farm policy, is featured in a 2016 CAFTA/ACCA newsletter series called *Trade is my Future*. In it, she discusses the significance of trade to her family's future; stewardship and succession planning at Hewson Farm, her passion for farming as a lifestyle and the opportunities she has had as a woman.

advocate for a federal policy environment that maximizes global competitive advantages and opportunities for Canadian farmers.

“I am one of those farmers. My name is Margaret Hansen, and I am a third-generation farmer from Langbank, Saskatchewan, where I grow canola, wheat, barley, and oats with my brother and cousin.

“You have already heard excellent comments from many agricultural organizations, and the Grain Growers of Canada believe that the importance of this trade deal cannot be emphasized enough. It is important for the future of farming and families across Canada. On a very personal note, trade is absolutely the future for my family and my community.”⁶⁹²

Margaret is grateful for the women in her family being given as much opportunity as the men:

“My family did a good job of transitioning down to the next generation and passing down responsibility...I think I was fortunate to be part of it, but also fortunate enough to belong to a family that encouraged both sons and daughters to have a place on the farm.”⁶⁹³

692 Presentation to the Standing Committee on International Trade, House of Commons, Canada. Hansen, Margaret. June 2, 2016. Found 12/04/21 at <https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/42-1/CIIT/meeting-23/evidence>.

693 *Trade is my Future: Meet Margaret Hansen*. CAFTA/ACCA newsletter. Found 12/4/21 at <https://cafta.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Trade-is-my-future-web-mock-Margaret.pdf>.

The capacity to accept innovation would become increasingly important to the success of western Canadian farmers. Though Tom and Robin are no longer young men, their spirit of striving persists, inspiring their families to take on new challenges, to learn, and to improve. This spirit is certainly reminiscent of their sea-faring ancestors. As a result, another constant on the Hewson farm is the ongoing upward trajectory of increasing efficiency.

Chapter 39

Teamwork Makes the Dream Work

AS THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY SAYING GOES, the only constant is change, and, in the case of the Hewson operation...people. In the mid 1800s, the seafaring Tom Waters Jr., had implored his brothers to join him in farming in a letter he wrote aboard *Gypsy* while in the port of New York:

“My Dear Brother John

I think it [Nova Scotia] would be a splendid place to start farming on a large scale, as you could always find a market, and if on the sea coast plenty of manure, sea weed, eel grass, thrown up in heaps by the sea, and which I see those that do farm use to advantage...”⁶⁹⁴

A decade later, this hope was still alive as he writes to his brother Benjamin:

“I am not trying to persuade you or advise you but *“Unity is strength”* and if we could both live together no matter in what country why we could help one another.”⁶⁹⁵

694 Letter from Thomas Waters Jr. to his brother John Waters. September 27, 1846.

695 Letter from Thomas Waters Jr. to his brother Benjamin Waters. June 19, 1856.

Tom Waters' wish never came to be, but one hundred years later, the sons of Tom's great granddaughter, Susan, and his brother Ben's grandson, Geoff, did exactly that. They find strength, Tom Hewson maintains, by working together as an extended family, where most of the labour is provided by family—including brother Leonard, and the wives of Robin and Thomas. As Tom's niece Margaret describes:

“On a farm, there's a blurring of personal, professional and community life; it's really hard to separate them and individuals contribute different things, all leading to sustenance and the vision and direction of the whole enterprise.”⁶⁹⁶

Tom's involvement in organizations outside the farm exposes him to new ideas. Early in his farming career he realizes the value in those connections and continues to seek them out. That strong network helps the farm adapt to new challenges brought by multiple changes.

Robin is steadfast and a hard worker and his constant presence at home on the farm enables Tom to develop his outside connections which helps both. Because they get along and support each other, they can realize the efficiency and benefits of operating as a single unit... also helpful as the number of farms diminishes.

Remaining open to change, being optimistic and having mutual respect assist them in weathering farming's ups and downs. As Robin's wife Dorothy reflects, “Tom and Robin had a very close relationship and they farmed very well together.”⁶⁹⁷

Leonard fills in around the edges, acting as a jack of all trades to make things work. He is the only brother to leave the farm for a significant amount of time and then return.

Mary provides an example of some of the new skills that are needed on the farm as business complexity increases. With her technical background, she takes Tom's record-keeping to the next level by computerizing the farm data and accounting and is generous in volunteering and aiding those needing a helping hand, often transporting them to appointments.

Meanwhile Dorothy provides the nurturing role. She raises the next generation, helps older family members, volunteers with community organizations, grows

696 Interview with Margaret Hewson. Author. December 6, 2021.

697 Interview with Robin & Dorothy (Sweet) Hewson. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.

and makes food from her garden, and always encourages education. She is a mainstay in the community and the backbone of the family.

And there is much blending of all these roles among the partners, allowing them to function in harmony.

The next Hewson generation steps up

As Tom and Robin wound down long farming careers in the mid-2000s, the Hewson farm has morphed into a multigenerational family-owned business. Tom and Robin recognize that the future success of the farm will require a wide range of skills and the team has grown to include two of Robin's children, Margaret and Geoff, and their cousin Mark Cowan.

Weekly meetings became a tool the Hewsons used to foster teamwork, as explained in an article about farm meetings:

“If it’s Monday morning at the Hewson farm, the family is meeting to discuss markets, business strategies and all the decisions that go into running a modern farm. The meetings take time and commitment, but the family is convinced they contribute to the farm’s financial success.”⁶⁹⁸



The Hewsons hold a team meeting. From L to R: Robin Hewson (holding grandson Callum), Geoff Hewson, Tom Hewson, Mark Cowan. Margaret Hewson has her back to the camera. From *Country Guide Magazine* article *Meet the Family*, May 14, 2012.

698 Photo caption. *Country Guide Magazine*. November, 2012.



Mark Cowan & his uncle Leonard Hewson share a moment between generations on the family farm. 2021.



The 2018 Hewson's harvest crew of family and friends celebrates with a group photo at its harvest supper. Back row, L to R: Allan Baird, Levi Froese, Joel Bruce, Shawn Cowan, Lane Roth, Mike Hutchison, Bobby Higgins, Geoff Hewson, Dave Epp, Margaret & Robert Rigetti. Middle row, L to R: Teri Baird, Jessica Froese, Ward Cowan, Chad Bruce, Bayley Hassler, Mercedes Bruce, Kate Hansen, Amy Hewson, Cole Hansen, Callum Hansen, Dorothy & Robin Hewson, Dave Cowan. Front row, L to R: Amber Cowan with Blake Baird on lap, Owen Hewson, Lachlan Cowan, James Hassler, Mark Cowan, Sophie Cowan, Emerson Cowan, Evan Hewson. Missing: Thomas & Mary Hewson, Leonard & Rose-Marie Hewson, Rosemary Cowan, Jeanette Hewson, Jim & Ellen Cairns.

The Hewson teamwork philosophy is perhaps best reflected in a 2018 harvest wrap-up social media post by Robin's son Geoff Hewson Jr.:

“Our Harvest Crew. Our harvest crew has members as young as 13 and as experienced as 80. Our harvest crew has students, retired farmers, people working outside their normal jobs, moms, fathers and everyone in between. Whether you make a meal, clean a window, fix a combine or drive a tractor, you are all an important part of the team. Thanks to all of you who help make up our harvest crew.”⁶⁹⁹



Family combines make the cover of the *Ag News* Fall Edition. On the day of this photo, Geoff & Susan Hewsons' grandchildren combine together in a wheat field between two historically significant places – Langbank (background) and the “Little Stone Church” (not visible) where their grandparents are buried. September 2021.

699 *Our Harvest Crew*. Facebook post. Geoff Hewson, Jr. September 11, 2018.

Epilogue

The Anniversary of a Century

DECEMBER 4, 2019, marked the one-hundredth anniversary of Geoff Hewson's arrival in Canada. It was an opportunity for the family to reflect on the preceding century filled with births and deaths, tragedies and triumphs, booms and busts.

A key spirit emerging from that reflection was the Hewson ancestors' belief that the future would be brighter if they worked hard and contributed to their communities. Anchored in this belief, these hardy pioneers ventured into the unknown, investing effort that did pay off, and continues today.

The legacy of family and continued through Susan and Geoff's grandchildren who are raising families and making their own marks in a variety of fields including farming, nursing, clergy, higher education, and the public service. In 2014, the Hewson farm morphed into the Woodside Farm Partnership with brother and sister Geoff and Margaret Hewson and their cousin Mark Cowan as partners.

Thus, the same land arduously worked by horse-drawn plows guided by Hewson ancestors at the turn of the twentieth century continues to be tended by their descendants, now using satellite-guided tractors. And today's Hewsons continue to look to the future with the same bright optimism of their pioneering forefathers and foremothers. As Heather (Hewson) Gosselin, great-great-granddaughter of Thomas Waters Sr., summed it up:

“I think that we are a somewhat unique clannish family. We stick together. It’s showing very well now with Margaret and Mark and Geoff being partners together—that fills me with joy that Grampa Hewson’s farm is into its third generation...Family is golden.”⁷⁰⁰



The Woodside Farm Partnership, owned by siblings Geoff & Margaret Hewson and their cousin Mark Cowan, looks to the next generation. In front of the Woodside sign are two of the numerous members of that next generation, Geoff Hewson Jr.’s children, sons Owen and Evan. 2019.

700 Interview with Heather (Hewson) Gosselin. Hewson, Margaret. 2019.

Acknowledgements

It takes many people to create a book of this magnitude and, while it's impossible to acknowledge them all, we would like to point out a few people who volunteered their time and/or shared their expert knowledge to make this book what it is.

A book is only as clean and beautiful as the quality of its production team. Our fine team included Megan Evans (editor-Saskatoon), Terry Corrigan (designer-Relish Branding, Winnipeg), the folks at Friesens Printers, and our very special group of beta readers, who not only read early drafts of the manuscript, but also provided vital assistance in proofing at the final stages. Margaret's mother-in-law Nola Ayers and Nola's sister Nancy Ayers joined other family members mentioned below who volunteered their time at these vital moments. Margaret's step-son Sam Rigetti rescued her by creating the map illustration of the Poplar Grove area in Section II, and her step-daughter Maria Rigetti assisted with the website. Our thanks to all our production team for making the book technically as clean and esthetically beautiful as possible. Not an easy feat for a book of this size and with some 451 photos.

In a family history book, much of the value is reliant upon the quality of the archives, and of the participation of family members, especially the elders. We give thanks to the Hewson siblings Thomas, Leonard, Robin, Heather and Rosemary and their spouses for doing a series of interviews with Margaret that began in 2019 and for acting as advisers for the subsequent three years. A special acknowledgement goes to Heather for ongoing consultation, particularly in the stories from the 1950s and onward. Each of Margaret's first cousins and siblings also contributed to the project, from finding pictures to beta reading early drafts to scanning images. A special thanks goes to Margaret's cousin Chris Evans (Ottawa) who has been, and continues to be, an invaluable editorial consultant. She also continues the work of transcribing family letters and adding

them to the website. Other family members who helped included Nick Turvey (England), Philip Prashner (England) and Roberta Cox (Regina).

Research takes as much (if not more) time than the actual writing of a history such as *By Sea, By Land*. The author is particularly grateful to the following for their voluntary, and incredibly valuable, assistance. Mark Duffy provided details about the bandolier equipment shown in the WWI military photo of Tom Cairns. Dean Bray, whose great-grandfather was William Wade, 2nd Mate of *Crown of Italy* when Frank Hewson was 1st Mate, provided numerous small details relating to the configuration of the ill-fated ship *Wealth of Nations*; an image of a captain's cabin; the measurement system for whale oil; connection to images of Frank Hewson's first mate and masters certificates, and invaluable stories and original documents regarding the shipwreck and subsequent inquest of *Crown of Italy*, including hand drawn maps and a calendar his ancestor made of the shipwreck island. He also provided Also for a description of how to interpret ship logs and salaries (ah, the fascinating world of pound, shillings and pence, to quote Dean...). Australian historian and librarian Dale Chatwin researches the British Southern Whale Fishery. In addition to his excellent papers about nineteenth century whaling, Dale was instrumental in adding information about *Barque Fawn*, and helping us de-crypt lingo and other aspects of the industry to give colorful background and a deeper understanding of Thomas Jr.'s whaling experiences. Scholar Kathryn Carter, an expert in historical diaries and autobiographies as well as early Canadian and women's literature, helped us better understand the letters of Elizabeth Butterworth.

We also marshalled the services of genealogy expert Nicola Hallam of family-historydiggers.com to uncover new information about Waters and Hewson ancestry. Nicola made two important research visits to the Lincoln County Archives in England, and her subsequent far-reaching and meticulous research reports provided bombshell discoveries of new information about the identity of Thomas Waters Sr.'s father and valuable insight into Frank Hewson's ancestry and childhood.

Special thanks go also to Margaret's husband Rob and sister Jeanette. Without their understanding and support through the thousands of hours that went into this project and the need to power through to the end, this project might have foundered at any stage during the past three years. Rob wholly encouraged and

supported her to pursue this project, even though it was more time consuming than either could have imagined. A great thanks to him for taking on extra family responsibilities in the face of a frequently unavailable wife for the past nearly three years. Jeanette also took on household duties when necessary, making meals, chauffeuring kids to and from activities, and just being present when Margaret couldn't be.

These family members, and many others, have been the shores to which she could return from the long-ago and far-away places she ventured. For this she will always be grateful.

About the Creators

Margaret first met Suzanne in 2019 while serving on the Wheat Growers' committee for their book, Warriors for Wheat, of which Suzanne was the author. Margaret later asked Suzanne to work with her to produce By Sea, By Land and to help create the Waters Family website, resulting in a close and continual collaboration lasting nearly three years.

Suzanne Paschall, author

Suzanne is the author of four non-fiction books (including *By Sea, By Land*), numerous magazine and newspaper articles, and two albums of original music. While writing and editing books, she is also working on her first novel, a short story collection, and several screenplays. She lives in Scottsdale, Arizona, but resided for thirty-seven years in Canada, seventeen of which were in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Suzanne grew up in Kansas, where her grandparents had landed after emigrating from Russia prior to World War I. They were hard red winter wheat farmers.

Margaret Hewson, family historian

Margaret has always been interested in family history, but it was only a few years ago that the stories and connections in her mind began forming a bigger picture that she wanted to document for future generations, and the book and website project were born. When not working on epic family history projects, Margaret farms. She lives near Moose Jaw, SK with her children and husband, Robert Rigetti.

A Final Word from Margaret Hewson...

The Waters Family Project

My aunt Amaret's death in 2019 was a reminder that time passes quickly, and another generation of stories needed to be recorded. It created an impetus for me both to preserve and move Amaret's work forward, and to document the stories of my parents and remaining aunts and uncles.

December 4, 2019, marked the one-hundredth anniversary of my grandfather Geoff Hewson's arrival in Canada. To mark that centennial, I interviewed my parents, aunts, and uncles, and shot video footage of the current family and farm to prepare a video project marking the one hundredth anniversary of both the farm and the Hewsons in Canada.

Yet, I knew this was only part of the story that reached back another century into a British seafaring heritage. Additionally, the western Canadian farming story didn't start with Geoff's arrival in Canada, it had started earlier with Susan's family and her parents and grandparents, John and Janet Dickey and J.A. and Alice Cairns.

From the Waters lines had come generations of strong men and women, and I wanted to tell their stories. The idea of a Waters family history book began to develop. I worked with my immediate Hewson family members as well as great-great-grandchildren of Thomas Waters Sr. from other branches of the family, such as Nick Turvey, Chris Evans, and Roberta Cox, and in 2020 hired a history author to write the book.

But I felt the family deserved broader access to the family's archival materials, and I knew that many of the objects needed to be digitized to preserve them.

In addition to the book, I have begun development of an archival website. The website address is www.mywatersfamily.com. It contains searchable content including transcribed letters; images and stories of artifacts; family trees; information pieces on a variety of subjects, and a special “Unsolved Mysteries” section that details some still-unknown parts of the Waters family story. My first goal was to establish the website with the first two generations of Waters family letters and then work towards adding more content in the future.

Another goal is to pass on the torch to the next generation, as it was passed to me and those before me. It brings to my mind a particularly nostalgic note that accompanied a wealth of genealogical information Elsie (Waters) Cairns shared in 1961 with her great-grandniece (and the aunt who inspired me), Amaret (Hewson) Smyth:

“Dear Amaret, Your Grannie said you were very interested in the Dakin Genealogy...All the stories I have heard about our ‘antique family’ are fast leaving my mind. Hope you can read what I have copied—you can easily see that my writing got ‘worse ’n’ worser’ and mistakes ‘more ’n’ morer’ as I went on and tried to keep the generations straight in my mind. Now you can puzzle it all out and go around in circles! I call it a prolific family. Lovingly, Aunt Elsie...”⁷⁰¹

I hope that the book and the website will inspire others in the family to carry out their own research in areas of family history that interest them. And I hope that the next generation becomes interested in taking up the torch and continuing to document the history for their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, as has been done in our family for two centuries.

Your invitation

In that vein, there are several ways you can connect with the Project. You can:

1. Join the mailing list. You will receive an occasional email newsletter that alerts you to new additions to the web archive.
2. Take on an “Unsolved Mystery.”
3. Do your own research to flesh out other areas of the family.
4. Share images and stories of artifacts you may have to be added to the website.

701 Note. Elsie (Waters) Cairns to Amaret (Hewson) Smyth. March 8, 1961.

5. Share your own stories and memories.
6. Interview an elder in your family and share the transcript, audio or video files on the website.

To join the list, or to discuss any other ways you can participate in the Waters Family Project, email me at margaret@mywatersfamily.com, or sign up directly on the website homepage, www.mywatersfamily.com.

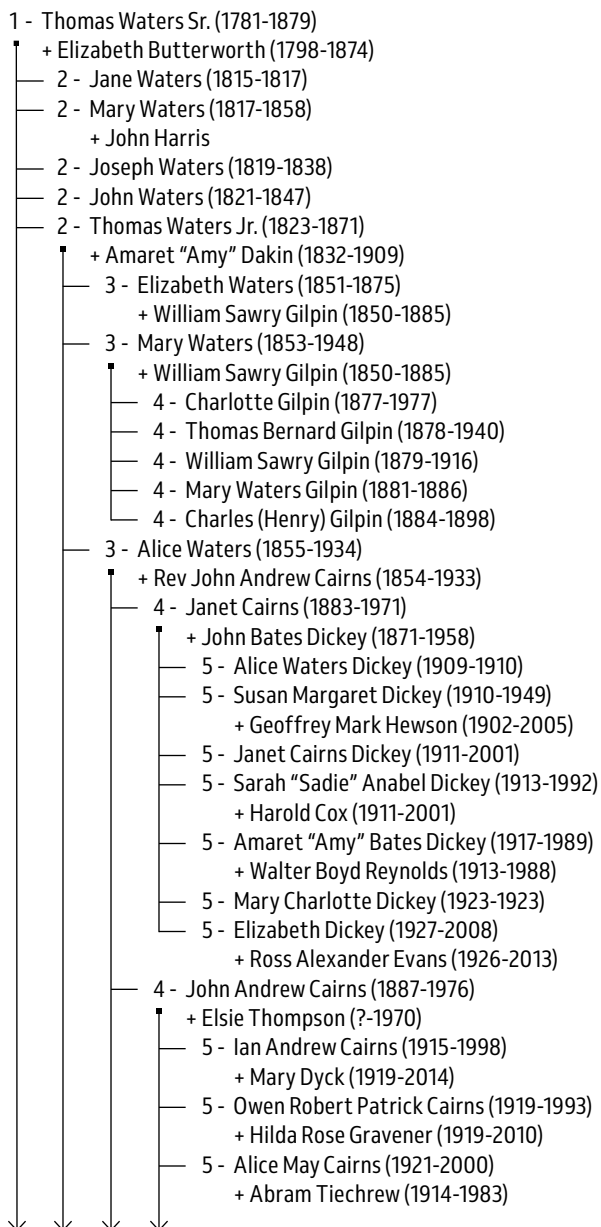
I hope you'll find something in the book and website that interests you and find ways to share with your family.

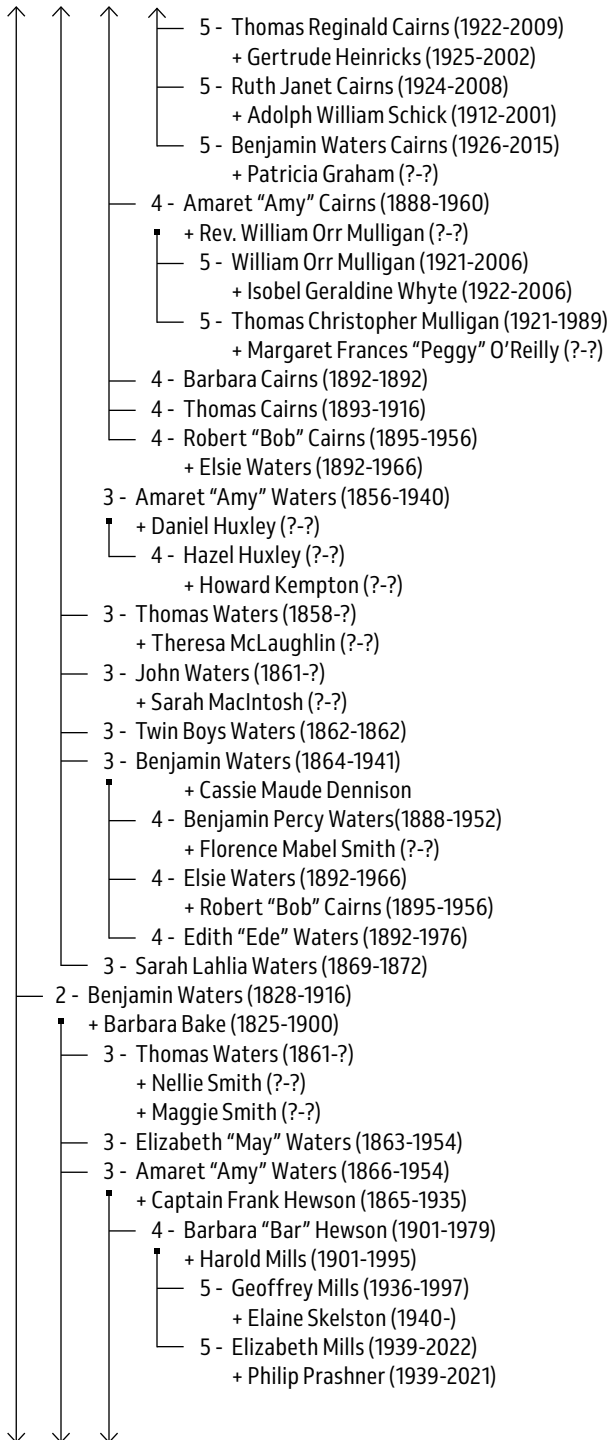
A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Margaret Hewson". The script is cursive and elegant, with a large initial 'M' and 'H'.

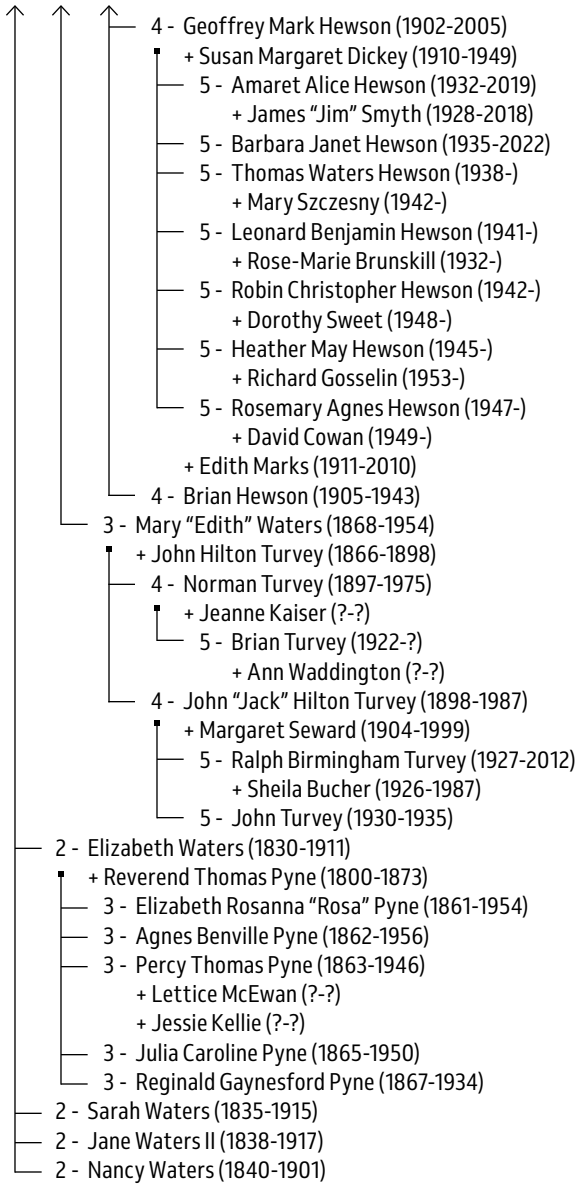
Margaret (Hewson) Hansen Rigetti

WATERS FAMILY

Five-Generation Descent Chart

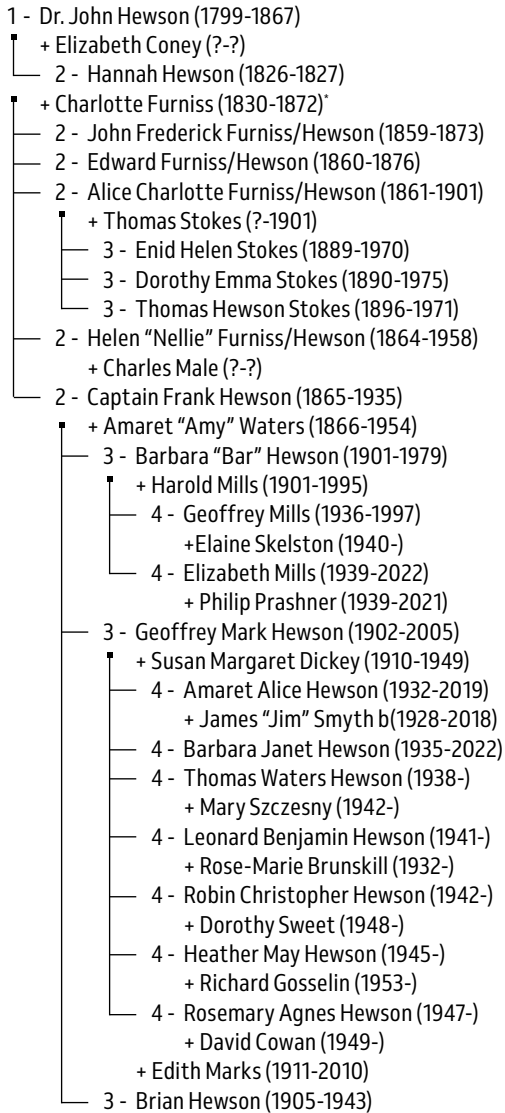






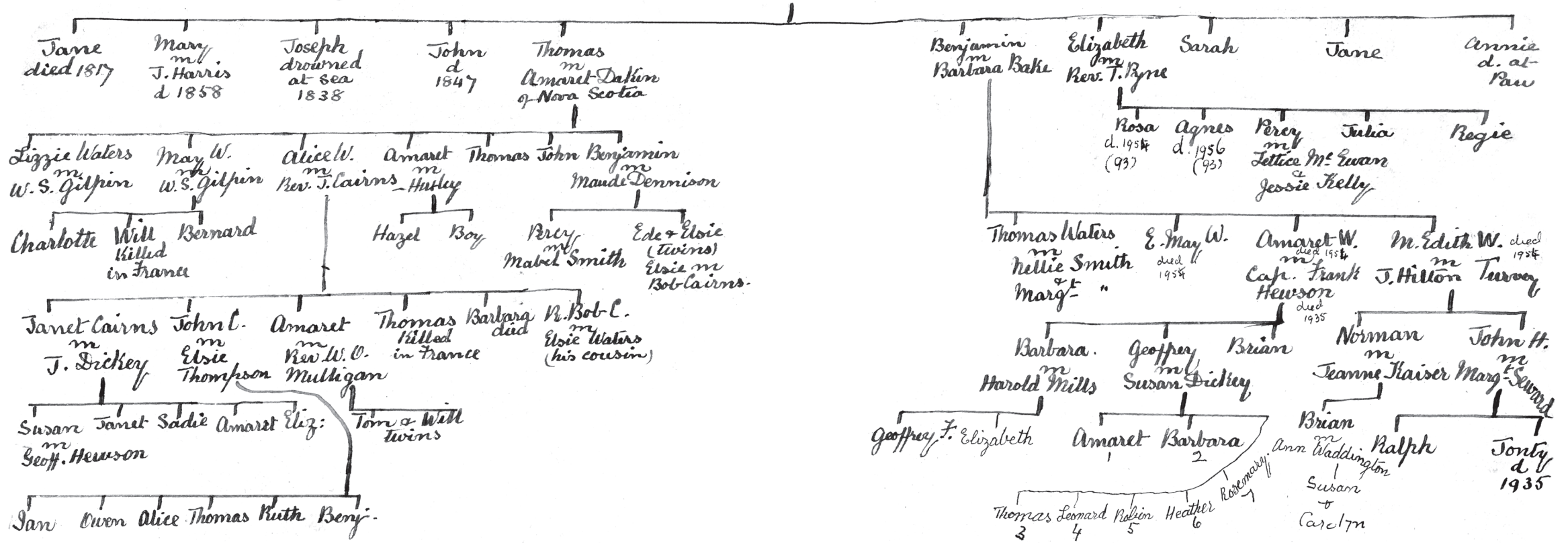
HEWSON FAMILY

Four-Generation Descent Chart



*Though they had children together, John and Charlotte were not married.

Descendants of Major Thomas Waters R.M.L.I. & Elizabeth his wife (nee Butterworth of Rochdale)



A handwritten family tree appearing in the Waters Family Bible.