

## Bio and other information about my mother, Florrie Elizabeth Risdale

Florrie Elizabeth Risdale , born in 1895, was the youngest of the John Risdale family. She was 14 when she came to Canada in 1910.

Most of the things I learned about Mother's childhood were related when I traveled with her on the only trip she made back to England in 1979 at the age of 84. As we explored a little of her Northampton home we found her school had become a community centre , her home a jeweler's shop and her church an infrequently used place of worship - two hours on a Sunday afternoon, and in danger of being demolished unless the citizens could save it as an historic site.

There was still a very large park near the old home. The second eldest sister, Nellie, had T.B. for which the only treatment then was rest and fresh air. She was sent to live with a family at the edge of town and her own family members daily walked the considerable distance across that park to visit her.

Mother's father and uncle owned a boot and shoe factory in Northampton that employed some twenty people. Her father was responsible to buy the shoe leather and other supplies which took him to London. His return was eagerly anticipated for the small gifts he would buy. Mother also told how she was entrusted to carry, even as a young girl, the payroll from her home to the factory. Whether this was the full payroll or only part of it I could not determine.

The most satisfying part of Mother's visit to England was being able to locate her closest childhood friend, Bessie with whom she had long-before ceased to exchange letters. Bessie was living with her daughter and son-in-law but seemed very isolated, the more so because she was nearly blind. But what a delight it was to see these two elderly women recalling childhood experiences and laughing about the times they would run in terror across the church cemetery as a shortcut to their homes. Death claimed both, less than a year later.

Mother told of the terrible seasickness she experienced on the boat over and how her mother sat down and wept when she discovered that most of the china packed for the voyage was broken.

Settled in Battleford, Mother became a secretary for the Livingstone Law Offices. She must have received all her secretarial training while still living in England.

Pictures show her dressed in an ankle-length skirt ready to ride her bicycle to work.

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Battleford social life seemed to fill the needs of these families. It centered around family and friends. Her closest friend was Freda Light, later married to Dick Nelson. Freda made a threesome with Mother and Harold Simpson before mother married the latter on June 4, 1918. An old album shows Mother and Freda dressed in army uniforms; in native headdress and in spurs and boots, climbing a telephone pole.

Mother and Dad settled on the farm west of Battleford and the move must not have been an easy one for a city-bred girl. She never became at ease with farm animals that might have been partly explained by an event in her Northampton life. Apparently animals were herded along city streets en route to market and one day a cow broke loose and chased her down a lane beside her home.

Mother never milked a cow, nor dared to reach beneath hand-picking chickens to retrieve the eggs. But no one could accuse Mother of pulling less than her full load of farm work. She planted, weeded and harvested the vegetable garden and picked wild raspberries, chokecherries, pincherries and cranberries. These were boiled, put into cloth bags to drain and the juice boiled to make jams and jellies - all this over a wood-burning stove in summer heat.

Laundry was done by hand with wash tubs and a hand-wringer set up in the kitchen. The laundry was hung on outdoor lines whether it was in summer heat or winter frost. Ironing was with "sad irons" heated on the kitchen stove. Sometime later a gas iron relieved some of that labour. I still marvel at how this diminutive, four foot ten-and-a-half inch lady happily took on all these responsibilities.

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Why is it that father has always figured more prominently in my thoughts than mother? Certainly she played a very large part in my upbringing.

It was Mother who tended to me whenever I suffered my frequent attacks of asthma. It was she who dug out the slivers I collected by going barefoot and she who soothed and bathed them.

Despite all the trouble such habits incurred, never did she suggest that I wear shoes. Patience was a major attribute .

Mother taught me how to knit, to embroider, to crochet - skills I still use today. Not until I had my own home and family did I enjoy cooking and baking as Mother had taught me.

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