

# My Family's Arrival and Life in Canada

By Alan Aldred

Canada is full of immigration stories, most, when told, come out as brave adventures driven by pressing need, challenge, plain wish for change or a dream. Our family certainly seemed to reflect many of those motivations undertaken in a spirit of adaptability and determination to eventually settle happily and permanently in their new country.

My purpose is to pass along to the present family what could be found in family records, accounts of events recalled from discussion, story telling, recorded in writing or from audio tape. Audio recordings provided most of the details and structure. My parents made the recordings by interviewing each other on what they remembered of the family's arrival and settlement in Oyama. A collection of family photographs, albums, scrapbooks, a few sketches, drawings, paintings and clippings offer some details of who, what, where and when.

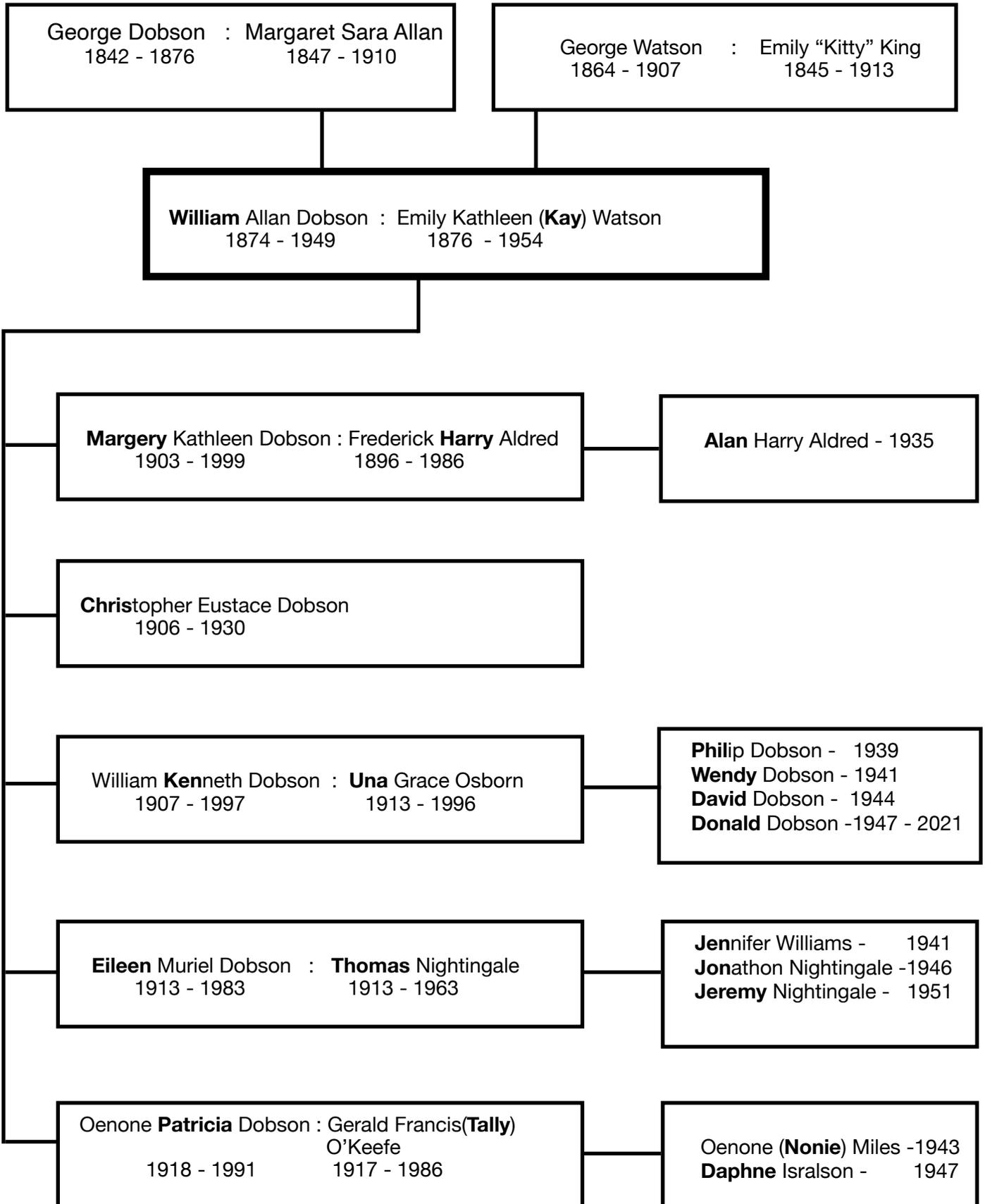
Although the story begins in the late 1800s, the Oyama portion runs from 1909 to 1927. It focuses on the village centre lying along the isthmus between Kalamalka and Wood Lakes. A history of this section is well described on the web site <https://infotel.ca/newsitem/the-history-of-oyamas-isthmus-shows-its-far-from-untouched/it76965> based on research by Dr. Duane Thomson of the The Lake Country Archive and Museum. The web site <https://www.lakecountrymuseum.com> is a further source of information on Oyama, including a timeline listing the arrival and departure of its citizens. A map on the inside of the back cover gives a simple, graphic picture of central Oyama showing its main geographic features, and the location of some sites, roadways and buildings of the time.

The story is divided into three parts:

- I. starts with the arrival and settlement of the Dobson family
- II. continues with the arrival of the Aldreds
- III. concludes with the community life of both families in Oyama

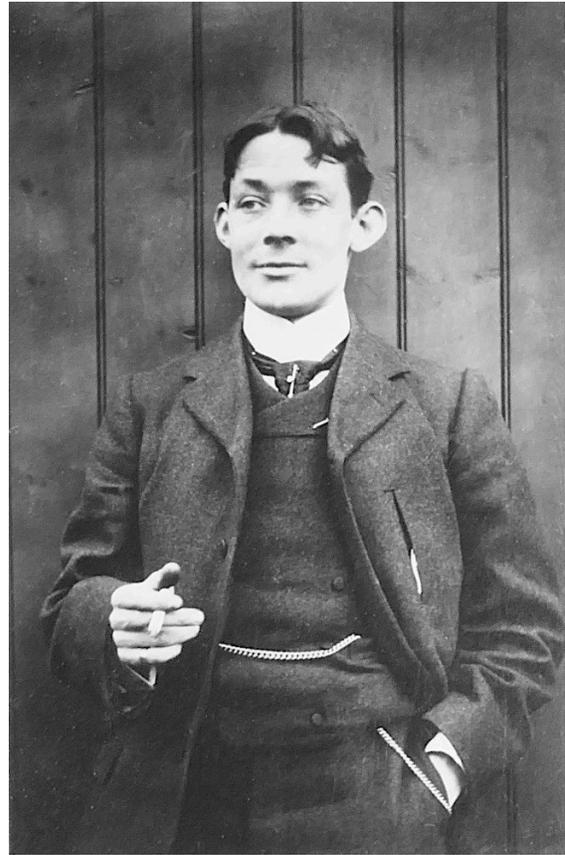
Limited genealogical charts are used to introduce the two families. A much larger chart has been drafted for the Dobson line by the Kenneth Dobson generation. Kenneth also compiled a very detailed set of diaries of his and his wife's life, work and considerable related world travel. The chart and compilation are held by his daughter Wendy Dobson. The Nightingale and O'Keefe families of the generation also have provided photos and information about their families. Jon Nightingale is also currently looking into the deeper ancestry of the Dobsons and Nightingales. The first chart includes my Dobson grandparents (highlighted), together with their children making the move and eventual immigration and settlement in Canada. All but two of the third generation (my cousins) are alive today. Full names are in the chart with short-form names highlighted for use in the text. The story, however, is limited to the first two generations, the ones who immigrated and remained in Oyama or nearby Vernon.

## Part I. Dobson Family (1890 - 1919)



My grandfather, referred to herein as William, was a restless young man. His parents accordingly felt that it might be good for him at the age of about 20 (Photo 1) to be exposed to a wider world. Accordingly, an arrangement was made for him to stay for a time with a relative in Texas. He was enthusiastic about this prospect and made the trip. However, he was soon not content with the visit and took off on his own, leaving Texas and wending his way up the west coast of the U.S. to Canada. He shortly found a job working for the Canadian Pacific Railway cutting railway ties along Mara Lake, near Sicamous, B.C. This would have been about 1894. He liked the experience and soon found a place to live in Enderby.

However, his restlessness surfaced again. In 1898 he returned to London to be with family and friends. During this time he became engaged to my grandmother Kathleen Watson, likely a sweetheart that he left behind but who had patiently awaited his return. William and Kathleen (Kay) married in 1902 in London (Photo 2).



1. William at about age 20



2. William and Kay just Married 1902

At this time William had settled in to start a pressed metal business, mainly pails and tin containers. He succeeded well with the business, enough to buy a new car (Photo 3).



3. William introduced to a new car (1903)

However, he soon ended up restless again with Canada often in the back of his mind. However, such thoughts had to be put aside because the family was expecting their first child.

Margery arrived in June 1903. Photo 4 shows her happily with her mother.



4. Margery with Kay (1904)

William, now with Kay and Margery in tow, returned to Enderby in 1906. They stayed at the King Edward Hotel and opened a general store and post office. They soon moved to a house (Photo 5 & 6). They were amazed that Enderby had electricity though lacking at the time in their house in London.



5. House in Enderby (1906)



6. Margery's introduction to winter in Enderby (1906)

Their second child, Christopher, soon arrived, the only of their five children born in Canada. Kay had trouble with a difficult birth. Chris was healthy but Kay was very ill. She was well cared for by Dr. Morris in Vernon, reputed to have saved her life. Because of the need for recovery time, also with news of an ailing father and missing her three sisters, the family returned to Finchley, London in late 1906. William apparently found someone to manage the post office and store. Kay was relieved to be near her father and with her sisters. She recovered soon to give birth to Ken in late 1907. Chris and Ken growing up are shown with Margery (Photos 7 & 8). The family returned to Enderby in 1909 but the stay was brief because William's aged mother was ill and failing. This time the post office and store were sold in 1910 and they returned to Deal, a seaside town near Dover. William's mother died shortly after their return. William inherited well and in 1911 opened a clothing business in London. Kay remained well (Photo 9). The second daughter Eileen was born in 1913.



7. Margery with Chris and Ken (ca.1912)



8. Ken & Chris (1913)



9. Kay and William (1913)



10. Eileen

By 1914, the family was facing war time with some bombing in London. During that time William was doing volunteer ambulance work in London with another van-like car of the time. As the bombing worsened they moved to St. Ives, Cornwall. Because of all the moves Margery, Chris and Ken had missed some schooling, especially Margery being the eldest. However, she rapidly caught up, going to a school by train in Penzance. The family all seemed content and settled for a short time. However, to avoid conscription, William with sons Chris and Ken headed back to Canada. Patricia, shown with her family, was born just as they were leaving England in 1918 (Photo 11). Without William, who was a wonderful nurse, Kay relied on Margery to help with Patricia and to look after Eileen.



11. William and Kay with Margery, Eileen & Patricia (Patsy)

William and the boys returned to Enderby but William had the dream of buying some acreage and starting a fruit and poultry farm. He found what looked very promising, a 10-acre patch in Oyama. Possibly the scene in the recent shot (Photo 12) on the way from Vernon further influenced his choice of a place to live. It is near the northeast corner of Wood Lake. He then set about adding on to an existing building to make a house for his family. He also built an enormous shed (Photo 13) to serve the farm, use as a workshop, for storage of construction material and a place to receive family furniture for the house on its way from England.



12. Looking southeast across central Oyama between Wood and Kalamalka Lakes



13. Large shed built ca. 1919



14. Location of Longacres lot lying between sawmill road and marsh edges

As the English like to do, William gave the place a name: “Long Acres Fruit and Poultry”, later just shortened to Longacres (Photo 14). Meanwhile Chris and Ken continued their schooling in Oyama, within walking distance of their house. However, it is not clear where they lived while the house was being constructed but it was likely the existing building. William was an excellent carpenter and made all the windows for the addition by hand which remained in place until the early 1960’s. He also did most of the interior finishing. The house was heated by a wood furnace which was not adequate in cold spells and tended to plug up with creosote which gave trouble and danger of fire from time to time. Water was supplied by a well and confirmed Oyama’s reputation of having the hardest water in the province. Although Enderby had electrical power, Oyama did not at this time. Electricity was supplied for a time by their own gasoline-engine generator charging a large set of green glass lead-acid batteries, each holding about a gallon of fluid and plates. Those jars were still around in the 1950s, often used as attractive, showy flower pots. An outside icebox was used for food preservation. Some in the community cut their own ice on the lake and stored it in an ice house insulated with wood shavings. Also ice could be purchased and delivered.

The “new” house (Photo 15) was made questionably ready for the arrival of Kay and daughters in 1919. Since the family so much enjoyed swimming back in St. Ives, William went to considerable trouble to make a good swimming spot at the nearby corner of Wood Lake. William improved the beach, found a boat and built a boat house for fuller enjoyment of the lake.



15. Longacres House ca.1920

Back in England, Kay, Margery with her sisters Eileen with new-born Patricia (Patsy) had the onerous task of arranging their travel arrangements to Canada: closing down the family house, selling some of the furniture and crating the rest for transport. The house had been cleared for sale or sold. The departure was delayed by a port strike. They were fortunate to be able to stay with Kay's sister Mable to wait out the delay.

The Atlantic crossing went well but as they arrived in the Quebec City port (Photo 16) they were greeted by a heat wave aggravated by being dressed in woollens suitable in England but not the hot, humid summer here, with all their light-weight summer gear packed in the ship's trunks for transfer to a train, their next step. Margery was struck by the smell of forest fire smoke in the air, a good reminder of their time in Enderby. William met them in Quebec and set the family up at the Chateau Frontenac for some relief from the heat. The next leg was a train ride to Montreal (for a gorgeous stop at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel) to transfer to another train to take them across country, through the Rocky Mountains to Enderby, then on to Vernon. When they arrived the desert-like Okanagan was under the same heat wave as greeted them in Quebec, records showing the temperature up to 102 degrees F. Not surprisingly, Kay and Margery were struck by how differently people were dressed, especially males with broad, long pants rather than shorts, loose shirts, strange haircuts, women's hats with flowered ribbons, etc. William drove them down to Oyama in his Reo car which had many useful aspects of a pickup truck with extra seats and storage space and with very large wheels to handle the rough one-lane road from Vernon to Oyama (Photo 17).



16. Disembarking ship in Quebec City.

Their new house was not really ready for them. It had little furniture, apparently with lumber still around in some of the rooms. All the crates and packed belongings had to be held for a time in the large farm shed to be eventually unpacked and find their way to the house. Here they were arriving in what must have seemed the frontier.



Photo 17. Car travel from Vernon to Oyama (safety in numbers)



18. Kay (centre) at the lake with all her kids

Nevertheless, on arrival all quickly slipped into the lake to cool off at the lovely spot William had prepared for them (Photo 18).



19. The house ca.1922

## Dobsons Settle In Oyama

By 1920 the Dobson family had begun to put down roots in their Oyama house. The orchard was becoming established and producing its first small crop. An early snowfall in late September and early October of that year presented the challenge of picking the fruit in snow and the use of a sleigh to haul the fruit boxes to the shed for later pickup and delivery. William's poultry farm plan was dropped because of the demands of the house and orchard.

When the family arrived, the house was still in need of work. The building consisted of two parts, the first an ordinary rectangular structure that came with the purchase of the property. William decided that it would become the dormitory for his family of five children and later for guests. He added an extensive new section to the existing structure. It included a kitchen, dining room, living room, bathroom and master bedroom, porch and outside entrance leading to the kitchen. The front entrance was located essentially where the new joined the old (Photo 20). The join ended up creating an attic space which, as referred to later, became daughter Margery's crude art studio. On arrival there was no furniture, the rooms empty except for lumber on the floor and a portable work bench. At first the family had the pleasure of sleeping on the floor. However, the kitchen and bathroom were apparently functioning, some plumbing having been done.

As they settled in, the house was found to have some serious design problems. For example, a wall had to have a doorway cut through to provide good access between kitchen and dining room. Kay said that only a man could make that mistake. Likewise linen closets at the far end of the house had to be relocated more centrally, the



20. House and Garden (ca. 1923)



21. The three sisters (Patricia, Margery & Eileen) in for a dip.

basement better set up to store preserves, etc. The house lacked some features of how Kay thought their living space should be better managed. These and other deficiencies were gradually overcome with time as the family settled in. Outside, attention had to be given to the raw terrain: planning road and walkway access, starting a lawn, preparing vegetable and flower gardens, planting trees and starting shrubs and hedges. The family had much to do: Kay and Margery on the inside detail and William, boys and hired hand on the outside physical work.

When the essentials had been done, William and his sons constructed a tennis court around which outside recreation and social life could form. Men in this family do better with the fun things, Kay would have said. The house and grounds (Photo 20) were gradually taking shape.

Chris, Ken and Eileen were in school in Oyama by this time. Patsy was still a toddler to be looked after. Kay of course had much to do in making a house a home leaving Margery to look after Patsy. Since Oyama did not have a high school and the commute to Vernon or Kelowna was not feasible at the time, Margery finished her own schooling by correspondence courses. She also returned to an abiding interest in drawing and painting well under way from art lessons in St. Ives. Thus she also took art courses by correspondence until she found a local teacher.

Social life was difficult for Margery at first because most of the newcomers were older and their children younger. However, she soon formed some very special friendships that flourished and endured in Oyama. One friend Edith, whose family had a wonderful stable of riding horses, was very dear to her. In general the family soon became well acquainted with neighbours and involved in community life and activities. For William, golf in Vernon was an important part of his recreational life and for Kay and family the lake, boating, swimming and tennis were greatly enjoyed with badminton taking over in winter. Kay loved to walk and sometimes would go entirely around Wood Lake, a distance of about 12 miles. Their life was alive with dances, production of plays, musical recitals, choir singing and with a place in their lives for church and charitable work. An example of the latter, a very active group of local women started as a work group that grew into a much larger organization called The Kalamalka Women's Institute.

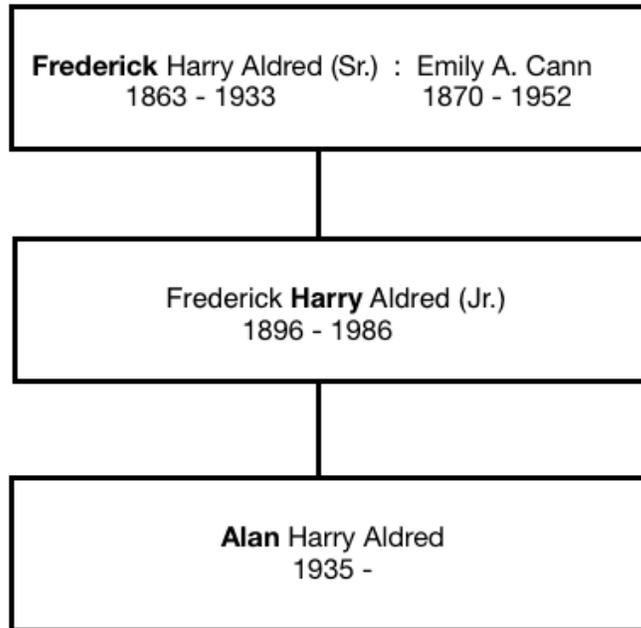
By 1925, the family had settled into what had become their new home. Photo 22 shows the entire family finally settled and together.



22. The entire family settled in together ca.1925

William Chris Eileen Margery Kay Patricia Ken

## Part II. Aldred Family (1904 - 1921)



The story now turns to the arrival of my paternal grandparents and their son. Copies of photos from the Aldred family collection are used to show their initial adjustment and illustrate Oyama's surroundings into which they eventually settled. Our collection included quality photographs taken by Harold Schofield between 1910 and 1912, circulated at the time as popular post cards. Scofield's work has been published by the Vernon Museum and Archives (2007) covering the larger area. Only post cards in our own collection were copied for this story. Photo copy No. 2 is an exception supplied by Dr. Duane Thompson of the Lake Country Museum and Archives.

### Family Arrival

Frederick and Emily lived in the heart of London. Frederick owned and operated a successful general store and at the time attempted to invest in a shoe-blacking expansion. However, a fairly deep depression was coming on at the time (1904) resulting in difficulties launching the expansion. The result was that both businesses were bought out. Frederick was quick to admit that he made the move at the wrong time. However, he had always had the big dream of travelling to Canada to see the Rocky Mountains. Thus with some proceeds from the sale of their business, the family decided to grab the opportunity to make the trip.

To help fund the trip they found an advertisement from Aberdeen Ranch in Coldstream, B.C. looking for a housekeeper and gardener. The Ranch offered to sponsor a couple in terms of the initial travel and living expenses. The sponsorship was for a year, after which the couple could stay on or leave to find their way as they wished. But the sponsorship had the condition that the couple must not include children. Thus their only child Harry at age 9 presented a problem. However, an aunt or uncle living on a farm near Buckinghamshire offered to look after him for the year and eventually to later set him up to travel to B.C. to join his parents. Thus Harry moved in for the year and Frederick and Emily set off for Canada following much the same route as the Dobsons: by ship to Quebec City, by rail to Montreal and across Canada through the Rocky Mountains to British Columbia. Frederick's dream was becoming real.

Frederick loved his work at Aberdeen Ranch but Emily was less enthusiastic about her tasks and after the obligatory year, wanted to leave. They moved to Vernon where Frederick rented a house, and started a cabinet making business. Emily worked as a seamstress. Frederick found work as a skilled, light carpenter and was able to handle the very meticulous tasks with window construction, mouldings and installation and expanded into paper hanging, painting and other interior finishing work. Emily had been a lady's maid and was already a skilled seamstress. She soon opened her own

business which briskly expanded to a staff of three. Both Frederick and Emily were soon on a solid footing. Photo 1 shows them shortly after their arrival in 1906.



Photo 1. Frederick and Emily

Now it was time for Harry to join his parents. His guardian saw him off with literally a name tag around his neck and a bag, sailing to Quebec City and on by rail to B.C. following his parents' path. He was content on the ship and wonderfully looked after by train staff and along the way by friendly passengers. He was not in the least frightened or bothered by the experience. His parents met him in Enderby and the reunited family returned to their nest in Vernon.

In 1908 Frederick with Harry built a small house in Vernon to become their home. In 1909, John Irvine put up for sale his post office and store located in Oyama at the crossroads (T junction of Oyama Road and the main road (later highway) between

Vernon and Kelowna). Frederick liked the idea of owning a store and post office in a village setting. Thus Frederic and John ended up trading houses. Emily kept her business going in Vernon for a time while Frederick reorganized and moved ahead with re-opening the store and post office in Oyama (Photo 2). Groceries and other supplies for the store were brought from Vernon by horse and wagon, sleigh in winter and also by a steamboat and pushed scow for heavier freight shipped down Long Lake (Kalamalka) to Trask's Landing or later to a cannery on Wood Lake (Photo 3). At this time Harry was completing his schooling in Vernon.

### [Move to Oyama](#)

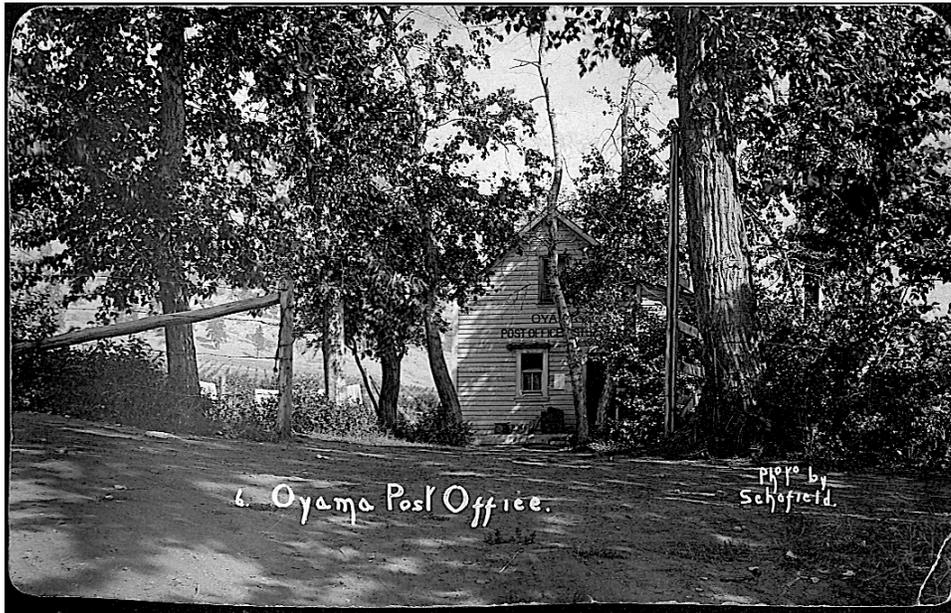


Photo 2. Oyama Post Office and Store 1909.



Photo 3. Cannery viewed west along the isthmus

Frederick, like many immigrants from large cities, was land hungry and picked up a preemption near Mable Lake. The preemption from the province offered land at a low price with the holder having obligations to develop and look after the property. The 160-acre parcel was at the east end of Mable Lake, about 3 miles back from the shore. The obligation was to put up a building, fence the property and live there for a month or two each year. Harry helped to build a log cabin (Photo 4) and with other tasks on the property. Frederick, however, had an unfortunate accident at the property one winter where he froze his legs which gave him considerable trouble. Harry took over the obligation and received wonderful help from a neighbour, Bill Chesterfield, who became a very good friend.



4. Harry building a log cabin at Mable Lake

Harry had completed school in what he described as a tar paper shack with 12 seats and was able to help Frederick with the store and post office. In free time he started to become acquainted with nearby neighbours, such as the Rayburn family who lived on the jet of land named after them (Photo 5.), Frank Rimmer and others.

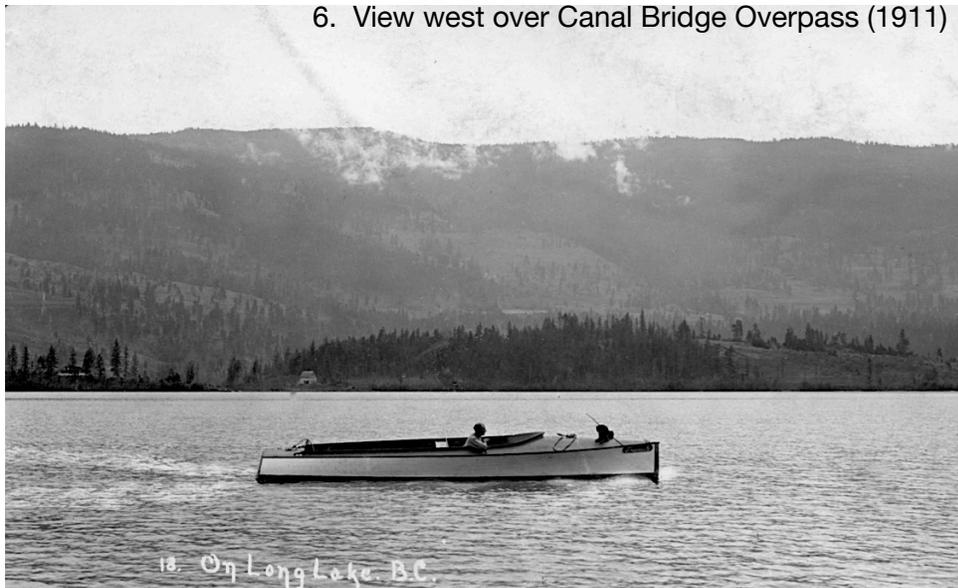


5. Rayburn's Point viewed from Trask's Point

During that time Harry had access to a boat, went hunting and fishing enjoying a free spirit leading to a great love of Oyama. The canal connecting Woods and Long Lake (Photo 6) gave a wide range of boating possibilities (Photo 7).



6. View west over Canal Bridge Overpass (1911)



7. Boating on Long Lake (1912)

Now living in Oyama (1912) Harry, having completed his schooling, wanted to pursue an abiding interest in music. He would ride to Vernon and back by bicycle (distance one way of about 12 miles) for violin lessons or alternatively he and Frederick would commute by boat on Long Lake. Mr. Stokes (of Stokes Point) later gave Harry piano lessons. Stokes later moved to Oyama on the east side of Wood Lake which was much more convenient. Harry worked for him and helped him settle into his new location.

The small tar paper school was replaced by a new building in 1911 as shown in Photo 8. It was later replaced by the Oyama Elementary School in 1916 located on the site of the sent day school and seen in a distant view in Photo 9.



8. Called the little white school house (1911)

By 1913 a tomato cannery (Photo 3) was installed on Wood Lake near the CP railway station. Harry worked in the cannery starting at 20 cents per hour and later 30 cents.

By now he was keen to support himself. As Oyama was expanding, the community was becoming more dependent on both cars and boats for getting around and hauling supplies. On one occasion, Harry helped a man with a MacLaughlin Buick car that refused to start. Harry went to work on it and soon figured out what was wrong and, had it running to the delight of the owner. This led to the idea of engine and machinery repair. He very soon learned how to completely strip down and overhaul or repair 2-cycle and other small engines, outboards, inboards etc. depended on for boat traffic and generators. Harry commented that the newly arrived from England were stuffy and not too pleased about him doing this kind of work. He paid no attention.

Viewed at a later time beyond the shed in Photo 9 several central Oyama buildings are visible: the nearest, CP railway section house; midway, the Oyama School; and CP railway station in the distance.



9. Distant view of central Oyama ca.1925

## Return to London

The family had now been living in Oyama about four years. Harry's mother Emily became very homesick and Frederick still having trouble with his leg injury was recommended by his doctor to find a gentler climate to help the healing. A return to England was contemplated. As well Frederick wanted to repay Harry for all his work on the preemption and help relaunching the store and post office. He wanted to give his son an opportunity to pursue his music formally. A return to London seemed to suit the family. Accordingly Frederick sold the store to Frank Rimmer and worked with him a few months to help with the transition. The family departed for London in December 1914, unfortunately just as WW1 started. Harry entered the Royal College of Music and started study and practice of the organ. His practical training was on the wonderful pipe organ at St. Paul's Cathedral in London.

Harry excelled at this and loved the experience. But the spell was broken by conscription in the war effort. He enlisted as a Canadian with the Royal Flying Corps as a radio operator (Photo 10). He was posted on the French front to provide the link between early fighter aircraft and the troops in the trenches. He was not physically injured during the war but was once buried in a trench by bombing and barely made it out. He suffered claustrophobia since. After the war ended he spent some time in Germany helping with the clean up and found an opportunity to play violin with the Cologne Symphony Orchestra. He said that language was not much of a problem in the musical world nor that he was playing with people that had been enemies. Music is universal he explained and diminished such concerns in his mind. Harry was never worried about language either. He said that all he had to do was carry a small seven-language dictionary around with him and rely on gestures and sketches.



10. Harry on the French Front WW1

Back in London after the war he found work playing background organ music at movie theatres and for church services or masses. Sadly he said he was not able to return to complete his studies. He said there was too large a break in momentum, the professional demands and spirit too demanding for him after the war. However, music was a constant and important part of his life, still playing the piano daily a month before his 90th birthday. He concluded that the amateur aspect of music was much better and joyful than music as a career would have been largely because of the more relaxed pace to plainly enjoy the music, play in a variety of places and with many very interesting people, several becoming good friends.

### Aldreds settle on return to Oyama

By mid 1919, Frederick's legs had healed well and he dreamed about returning to his Mable Lake property. Emily was keen to return too, glad to put the war behind them Photo 11. Harry was rethinking about how he could pick up from where he left off in Oyama. A thought was to start a delivery business since the area would be expanding at this time with a need to transport orchard and related farm supplies, fruit tree nursery



11. Emily and Frederick as they return to Oyama

stock and other farm produce. In the meantime they rented a house for a short time to solidify their plans. To sustain them, Emily started an egg and poultry business and growing berries for local sale. She greatly enjoyed the outside work and did well with it.

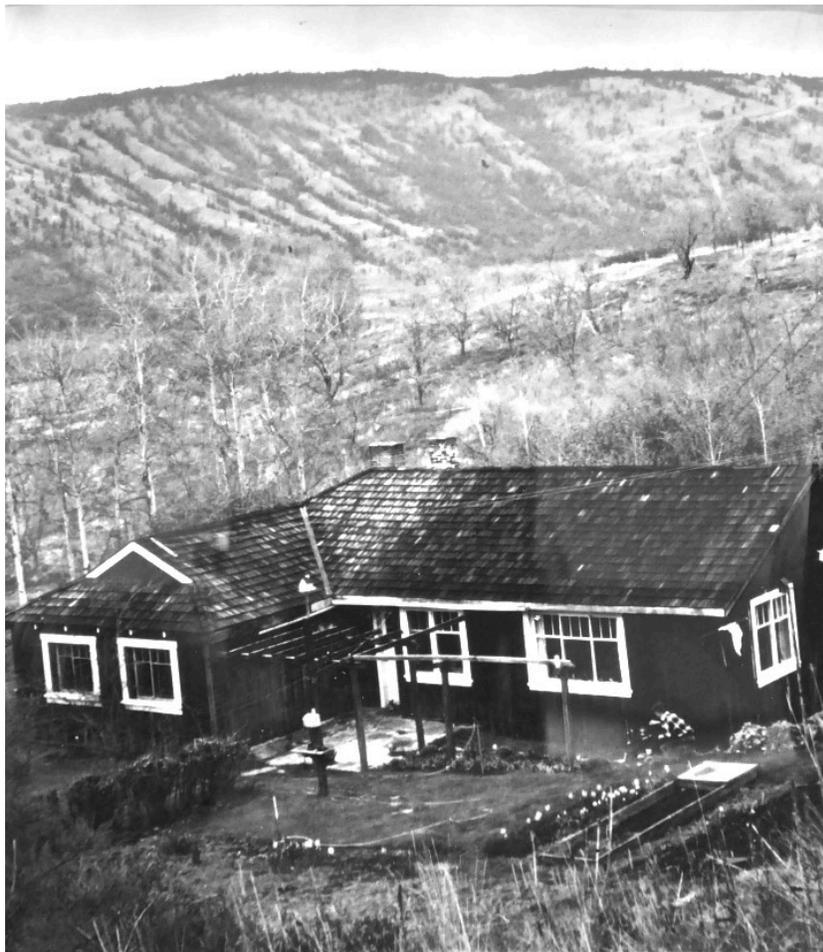
## The House

Harry, having thought about the prospect of starting a delivery business, decided to start with a small Ford Model T truck which he bought in 1919. Shortly afterwards he and Frederick acquired a 12-acre property aided by a soldier settlement program established after the war to help soldiers such as Harry regain civilian life. The property was located on the upper bench about 3 miles from the village centre on the east side of Wood Lake. It came with a log cabin in which the family lived while Harry and Frederick were building their house. The building site needed some serious preparations: road access, clearing of brush and trees (Photo 12), levelling and excavation for the foundation. Once the house was completed and habitable (Photo 13), they turned to landscaping tasks such as a yard, lawns, gardens, hedges, etc., building a garage for his truck and farm equipment, workshop, and establishing a reliable water supply for the house. Fortunately, the house was close to a flowing underground source called Ribblesworth Creek. Actually it was a bit too close to the house creating



12. Land clearing for house

a basement problem at first where part of the creek ran in one side of the excavation and out the other. This was overcome by carving a bypass across the basement floor and installing a covered drain. The creek however, bubbled up to the surface as a spring nearby which supplied very cold, excellent quality water for drinking, cooking and was adapted as a cooler for food. The spring water, however, was hard and unsatisfactory for washing and laundry purposes. Fortunately, irrigation water for the orchards passed the edge of the property and was soft and suitable for washing. Frederick and Harry constructed a large cistern on a rise above the house to supply soft water during the winter months. Since they had no electricity at the time, the soft water had to be delivered to the house by gravity feed. The system was still working when the property was sold in 1959. The soft water was heated by a wood-fired boiler that Harry made out of a water tank. It served even after electric water heaters came in which were weak and slow at first.



13. Family house built by Fredrick and Harry viewed at a later time from a hill with the young orchard beyond

## The Orchard

Shortly after completing and moving into their new house, attention turned to planting the fruit orchard. The property was located on an upper bench. Benches refer to the alluvial terraces formed in glacial times with blocks of ice in the lakes. During the ice melt, water flowed off the slopes and around the lakes depositing rich alluvial soil and gravel depending on flow. The alluvium laid down excellent soil for the orchards especially the middle and lower benches and the gravel was useful fill for road building at the time, landscaping, rail beds, etc. Harry's property at this point was undeveloped and required starting from scratch. First, the existing grassland had to be cleared of brush, some scatter trees, and rock in preparation for planting. A horse and wagon or stone boat were used in the clearing and removal process. Horse, plough and harrow were used to turn the soil for cultivation and irrigation. Once the land had been cleared and cultivated the tree planting could start, in his case, about 500 purchased young apple stock.

## Irrigation

For the orchardist, irrigation was an important routine starting with the newly planted stock and increasing steadily as the orchard developed and especially when it came into full production. In much later years a more efficient portable sprinkler system took over from the ditching method used initially. Nevertheless, as explained next, irrigation was a continuing preoccupation and formed a steady summer routine for the orchardists.

The Okanagan Valley is described as a semi-arid desert, meaning that the annual precipitation would be less than 12 inches of rain on a dry year. Some years could face draught demanding stored water. Fortunately, the higher elevations in the mountains received much more precipitation than the valley mainly as snow in winter. The melt water was captured in the mountain lakes and spilled out through creeks to feed lakes such as Duck, Wood and Long Lake in the valley below from which irrigation water could be drawn directly or from wells. A more efficient approach was to create mountain reservoirs using dams and gates to collect and store water and existing creek courses, pipes and flumes to deliver the water to the orchards. In Oyama wells or the lake were important source of water on the western side. The orchards on the eastern side, were able to take advantage of the mountain reservoirs, in Oyama's case, Island Lake (now Oyama Lake). It was set up as the primary source using dams and gates to regulate flow, an existing creek (Fall Creek see map) to carry the water down into the valley and a diversion system of flumes or pipes to deliver water to the orchards along the benches. The orchard properties were granted a water right which determined how much an orchardist was entitled each year. A metering system measured the amount that each orchard would receive. This was strictly monitored by a bailiff. All of this was directed by a group of orchardists called the Wood Lake Water Company. The team in Photo 14 is likely an example of work on some aspect of the delivery system.

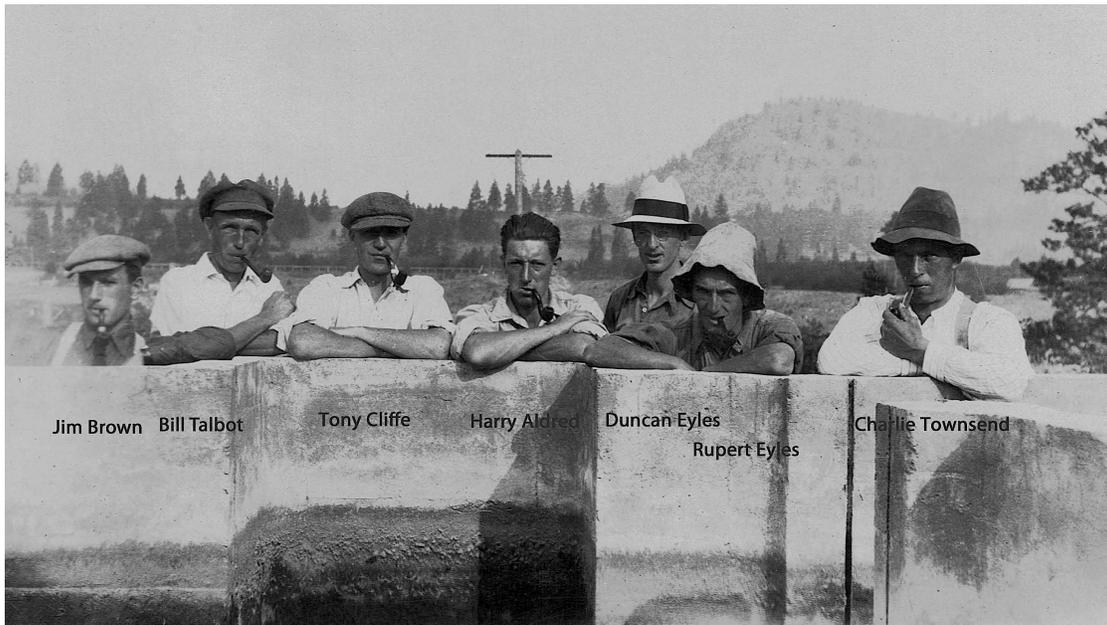


Photo 14. Oyama team at work

## Orchard Development



15. Young orchard's first bloom

At this time a newly planted orchard would take 10 years or more to come into bearing with small crops at first (Photo 15). Many in Oyama had to find alternative sources of income for the startup period. Some grew annual crops such as tomatoes, potatoes, berries and other vegetables. Others used part of their properties for mixed farms of livestock, for milk, poultry, eggs and meat production. As mentioned Harry's mother Emily had already established a poultry and egg business. Milk, cream, eggs, bread

and vegetables which were given, traded or sold among neighbours. The open, lightly-forested grassland above the rich orchard land was used for livestock, mainly beef production.

### Delivery Business

Harry's Model T (Photo 16) was used primarily at first while building their house and getting the orchard started. Its first licence plate was triangular in shape with the number (BC 1). It led to the earlier idea of offering a delivery service in Oyama while waiting for the orchard to come into bearing. The business started very well. Many of the local orchards were still being established or enlarged needing building materials and supplies such as fencing, cement, feed, nursery stock, fertilizers, etc. At this time the tree stock came mainly from Vernon or Kelowna. Heavier freight from Vernon was shipped down Long Lake by barge. Harry started with the small truck with just 2 or 3 deliveries per week but soon daily, later shifting to larger vehicles. At harvest time, fruit had been hauled by horse and wagon but that too gradually could be done more efficiently by truck though not for access within the orchards. Thus his trucking business was able to offer a modest but successful service. His business continued until 1959 as Harry approached retirement and the business sold.



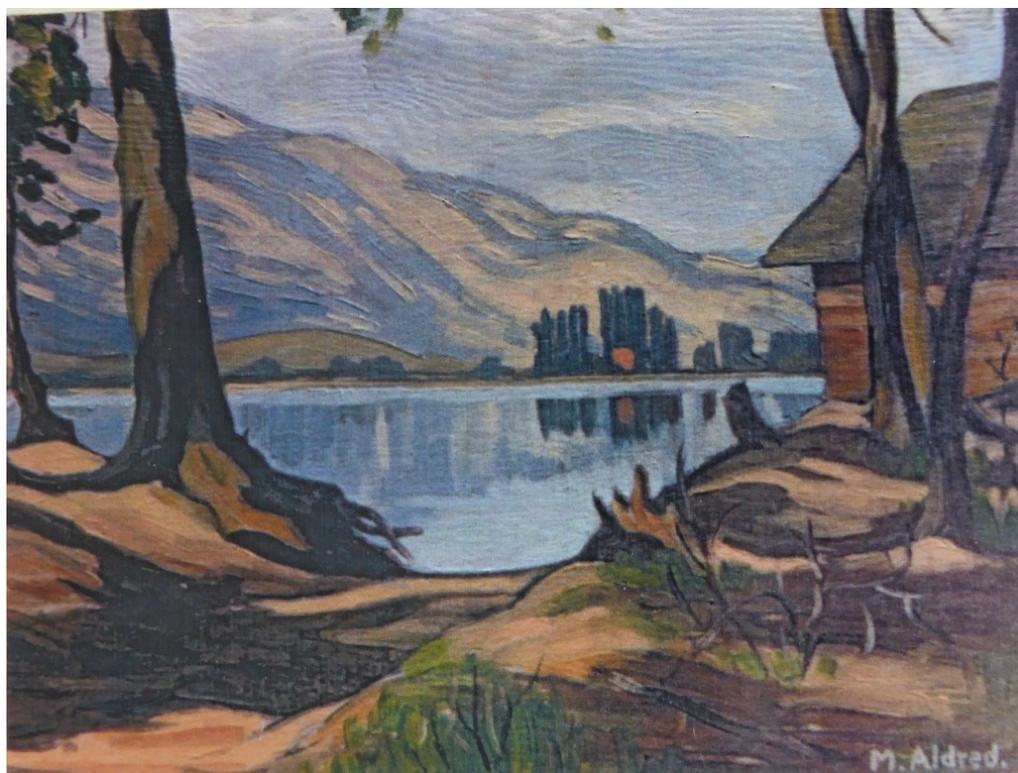
16. Harry and his Model T

### Orchard comes into bearing

As the orchards became established and bearing fruit, the pace of work increased.

Since the orchards had been a natural grassland, many were inhabited by wildlife some of which would damage the young trees. The common ones were mice, gophers and rabbits which girdled the bark of the young trees and bear, deer and birds which were waiting for the fruit. As the fruit production started up many insect pests and some blights also had to be treated mostly by several means of spraying trees with insecticides or fungicides. Of course, the irrigation was a continuing duty, trees had to be pruned and shaped, usually late winter and, in early summer, the developing fruit crops thinned. Summer hale storms could do considerable damage, even wipe out a crop of the soft fruits. Eventually, come late summer and autumn, the crops would be harvested, the very busiest time of the year. Harvesting at the time was by hand picking the fruit into boxes or bins from ladders to reach up into the trees. The fruit would be picked up in the orchard by tractor and wagon and delivered by truck to one of the packing houses, where it was sorted, packed and stored ready for shipment and the market. Marketing was a whole story of its own but the orchardists at this point could at least breathe a sigh of relief and take a bit of a rest.

The preceding largely completed the settling-in process common to most orchardists getting started in Oyama. Now with a little more free time, family activity could expand into more involvement in community life, friendships, schooling for their children, charitable causes, recreation, and other interests apart from work. Painting (17) shows the approximate location of Oyama's community hall tucked away among the poplars where much of the village activity took place covered in more detail next.



17. Painting by Margery Aldred of Central Oyama looking Northwest across Wood Lake

### Part III. Community Life in Oyama (1921- 1927)

By this time both families were finding their feet. They had acquired property, homes, livelihoods, developed friendships and involvement in community activities. However, the Dobsons and Aldreds took some time to become well acquainted likely because they differed in arrival time, family size, character and life style. This chapter reflects the differences through their activities, interests and community involvement to eventually settle together as a content family unit.

#### Early 1920s – Dobson Family Activities

William's orchard was developing well with the usual routine: irrigation, control of weeds, dealing with vermin, insect and disease control, pruning, shaping of the trees and thinning crowded fruit as the trees produced their first crops.

He was an excellent carpenter thus set up his work shop in the big shed and continued work on house details such as its doors and windows, basement storage shelving, etc. He apparently hand crafted all the windows needing replacement in the original part of the house that came with the property.

On the recreational front, William looked after installing a tennis court which would become the beginning of the game and parties for family, friends and neighbours. He was an avid golfer, joined a club in Vernon and introduced the game to family and friends. In his spare time he built the hull of a large motor boat for group outings on the two lakes. William had many other talents as well, such as writer, artist and cartoonist (Figure 1). When a family member was ill, he took over as an excellent nurse.



Figure 1. Examples of William's Cartoon Drawings

Kay continued with making improvements to the house interior and to take advantage of the abundance of local fruit and vegetables. She was not only enthusiastic about the fresh fruit but also became very keen on putting down fruit preserves, many jams and sauces. She needed storage space and called on William to set her up with a large shelving unit in the spacious, cool basement of the house. This led to a spot of trouble. Kay soon packed the shelves with her bountiful collection of bottled gems but was pressed to share some of the space with William. He liked to preserve local fruit as well but with a preference for grapes. So he got into wine making quite seriously to the point where he wanted to experiment with making an effervescent or bubbly, champagne-like drink. Thus he took the time to turn a tapered plug to form an airtight bung for his 5-gallon demijohn. He apparently hammered the plug in to enhance the effervescence. Thus the fermenting mixture was left brewing for a few weeks and one night a great explosion shook the house and woke everyone to find that the demijohn shattered taking with it a large portion of Kay's precious preserves creating a very unhappy wife and a huge mess in the basement. This event became one of a few family yarns retold (in variation) over the years.



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Kay was a very athletic person, good at tennis and a great hostess. William's tennis court then sprung to life, at first with family games which soon became tennis parties with fiends and neighbours. Besides tennis and golf, the family loved the lake for swimming, boating, and picnics and spaces for garden parties in summer. In the quieter winter period recreation switched to badminton, skating, skiing, dances, plays, school children performances and many other community activities illustrated later. Considerable attention was given to schooling as the families grew, and later charitable causes were taken on such as those advanced by the Kalamalka Women's Institute.

### The Dobson Children

Margery continued her study of drawing and painting through correspondence courses at first then later with local art teachers such as Miss Topham Brown. Margery was a trained portrait painter but her first love became landscape which she pursued all her life since coming to B.C. Her interest and work are elaborated in Figure 2. Photo18 is a copy of her painting of the Oyama sawmill.

**ARTIST OF THE MONTH**

c. 1985

**Venturing into abstract**By MARY H.E.  
BLACKBURN

Margery Aldred, of Oyama, has been painting beautiful watercolors for many, many years and she has had little formal instruction in this Art.

Born Margery Dobson in London, Eng., her family located at Penzance in Cornwall where Margery grew up and took her schooling. In 1906, the family moved to Canada.

Her father had been in Canada as a young man when he worked for the Canadian Pacific Railway. He returned to England, married and settled in Cornwall, but he could never get Canada off his mind. He longed to return to make his home in British Columbia. He finally persuaded his wife to make the move and they settled first and briefly at Enderby. Margery's mother was very homesick for her family and for England so late in 1913 they went



MARGERY ALDRED  
... self taught

back for a visit and were in England when war was declared in August, 1914. They could not then return to Canada. They lived in Cornwall for part, at least, of the war years and then came back to

Canada in 1919 to settle in Oyama.

The Dobsons were fruit farmers and Margery, who had always loved to draw and paint took full advantage of the fabulous scenery all around here. She was able to take some classes from the late Miss Topham Brown where she worked in watercolor and pastels, but for the most part she has been self taught.

In 1927, Margery married Harry Aldred and they continued to live in the Oyama district and to fruit farm. They have one son, Alan. Alan is now married and has one child. He is now with the Forest Service in Ottawa, and Margery and Harry regret not being able to enjoy their grandchild while she is growing up, but they do delight in occasional visits from Alan when he is able.

Margery enjoys painting landscapes but also does a few abstracts and would like to explore that art form more fully. It does provide a real challenge to convey ones ideas, without the conventional forms. She reserves a portion of their family room for her painting and so is able to return to it at any time. She paints at least once a

week as a general rule. Her husband and family are very supportive and proud of her work, and this encouragement allows her to take time for sketching out of doors and painting on location too when the weather is favourable. She has her pictures professionally framed and will sell them when especially requested to do so.

As well as painting, Margery Aldred really enjoys and excels at dressmaking and gardening and she always has some knitting on the go for relaxing moments. She enjoys a full and active life and has lived in some really beautiful spots on both sides of the Atlantic. Memories of Cornwall must surely be grist to her mill—the painting of beautiful watercolors. She is an active member of the Okanagan Artists' League and as well is interested in Community affairs. I would say she is certainly one of the lucky human beings who is never, and will never, be bored, an invaluable ingredient to a long life.

Be sure to watch for one of Margery Aldred's paintings in the reception area of the Art Centre during the next month.

Figure 2. Artist of the Month



18. Oyama Sawmill

The Oyama sawmill is a story in itself because of the number of times it failed and changed hands when the price of ties and rough lumber rose and fell. It still exists today and perhaps has learned the “value-added” advantage of not milling only one or two products.

Chris and Ken were finishing their schooling in Oyama at this point. They worked with William on completing the landscaping around the house, orchard work and taking on jobs with neighbours. In their free time they liked the rough and tumble of outdoor activities, becoming boy scouts leading to a love of the wilderness, hiking, camping (Photo 19), skiing and skating in winter.



Local Boy scout Troop



Chris & Ken



19. A Camping Trip.

Eileen and Patricia were at school in Oyama (Photo 20) and enjoyed the outdoor life too but to a lesser extent than their brothers. In winter they were keen on skiing and skating and summer hiking, boating and swimming.



20. Eileen and Patricia respectively are the first two on the left end of the middle row (1926).



Eileen



Patricia



Margery on the Slopes

## The Aldred Family

On the Aldred side, Frederick and Harry had completed building their house by 1921 and moved ahead with putting up a large garage for Harry's planned delivery business with plenty of space for a truck, tractor and attachments. The garage included a pit to service the vehicles, and fuel tank with hand-cranked fuel pump. They also built a large workshop for wood and metal work including a forge, welding equipment, compressed air, metal lathe and a complete carpentry shop. The orchard was developing well by now, soon to come into bearing. During this time Harry expanded his delivery service to a trucking business which led to larger vehicles. Emily continued her poultry and egg business and, with Frederick, were planning on opening another store.

## The Two Families Converge

The preceding life style and activities illustrated some differences between the two families but community life soon drew them together. However, the real catalyst came from the meeting of Margery and Harry. How did that happen?

They were aware of each other, Margery saw him passing their house in his truck on his way for supplies or returning from delivering orders. Harry caught glimpses of her picking apples in the family orchard and was captivated, keen to meet her either by design or chance. It turned out by chance: the delivery of a truckload of furnace ducts from Vernon to the Dobson house. The delivery did not go quite as expected. Harry had picked up the load in Vernon. The ducts at that time had to be large, about 12 to 18 inches in diameter because the furnaces of the time required heated air to circulate by convection rather than fan. The ducts were also galvanized and slippery, all of which made tying down the bulky load on his small Model T difficult. On the rough road to Oyama the load started to loosen and slip. Suddenly he lost the entire lot, flattening or bruising some of the ducts as they tumbled off the truck. On reloading he decided that some of the pipes would have to be partially flattened by hand to have them pack together more securely. He restored the battered load and eventually got to Oyama all right but on pulling up to the Dobson house he was met by most of the family waiting and watching with excitement as the truck rolled in.

Harry was pretty nervous at the arrival. Racing through his mind was how best to handle the damage, sort out what could be saved and what would have to be replaced as the deformed load was unloaded. William was naturally very upset with the sight and did not hesitate to show considerable annoyance. Harry quickly offered to either compensate for the damage, replace the order — whatever it would take — but not quickly enough to quell the frustration and irritation. It was amid the fuming that Margery and Harry met. He was keen for the opportunity to meet her but couldn't believe that it should be this way. However, Margery was not in the least concerned about the blowup but rather found it hard to contain the humour of the situation though impressed with Harry's degree of composure under the circumstances. Nevertheless she was very concerned about him and the position he found himself in. It all was

eventually resolved and became another family tale shared and retold for years, often by William. The wonderful meeting took place in 1922.



21. Portion of the Aldred Living room.

Margery and Harry were soon together at dances starting with friends as parties at the Aldred house in its large living room (Photo 21). Harry with his musical background had a piano and soon assembled a small group of musicians to play together, singing and sometimes for limited dancing. This became very popular among friends and soon needed more space eventually expanding into Saturday night dances at the village community hall. Margery's only complaint then was that Harry, playing in the band, was not available enough for dancing. The band also expanded, Harry on piano (Photo 22) or violin and, as a lark, the band needing more brass, he undertook to learn the tuba which turned out to be huge fun for him. The roaring twenties was finding its way.



22. Harry on Keyboard with a Quartet of Friends

For these dances Harry of course used his horse and buggy to come down from his house up on the upper bench to pick up Margery at the Dobson house on the way to the community hall. By this time he had pretty well recovered from the furnace duct issue. All seemed better in the embarrassment area until, for one of the dances, he booked off playing in the band to make for a more special time on the floor with Margery. He was to pick her up according to the usual routine with horse and open buggy. Having left his house he was making the three-mile ride down the middle bench road when his horse was suddenly spooked and bolted off the roadway up onto its bank spilling Harry off his seat, onto the roadside leaving him to collect himself. The horse, however, returned to the road with the buggy attached and righting itself to trot on the road down past the hill near the Anglican Church to stop outside of the Dobson house to pick up Margery as it was used to doing. Harry was left to walk or jog about a mile to the Dobson house to explain the lateness to Margery, arriving to find the horse, buggy and Margery seated and ready to go. She found this escapade humorous too but again sympathetic to another of Harry's predicaments.

Further to Harry's courting period, the preceding was not the last awkward event. One Sunday evening Harry picked up Margery and went to the community hall to play badminton with friends. After the game Harry had just dropped Margery off at her home. On leaving to go up the hill however, his horse had another fright and bolted again, this time breaking the whiffle tree (connection of horse to "carriage") and trotted off home leaving Harry and his buggy behind and Margery "laughing her head off", he feeling less than happy about having to walk the three miles home and later recover the buggy. Margery later commented that Harry makes out much better with engines, trucks and other metal objects than he does with horses.

## Middle 1920s – Community Development

Oyama by now had grown and was becoming well established as can be viewed in its basic infrastructure of roads and railway (Map on back cover) but also its school, post office, store, transportation systems, packing houses for handling fruit just starting up and, not to forget, activity sometimes of its sawmill, logs being hauled in and ties and lumber out.

The railway was very important to the growing fruit industry. It was installed around 1925 (Photo 23).



23. Canadian Pacific Railway installation viewed east along the isthmus ca.1925

Oyama's community life was also becoming well established by this time, an early example was a picnic that took place on Trask's Point (Photos 24 & 25)



24. Trask's Family House



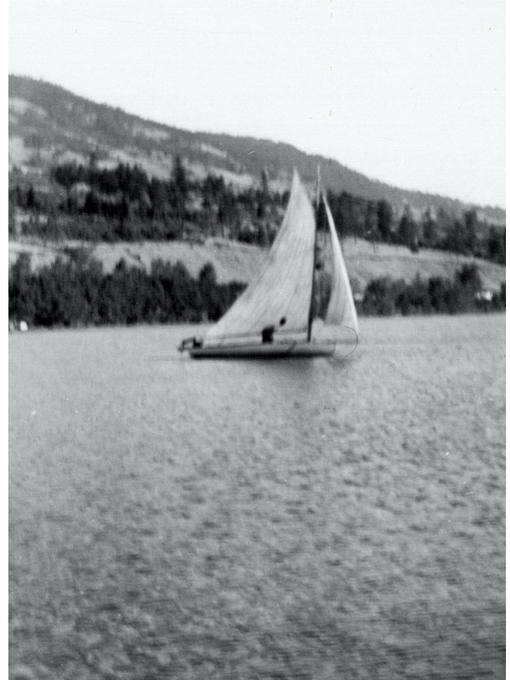
25. Community picnic on Trask's Point with note: nearly all of Oyama was present ca. 1925



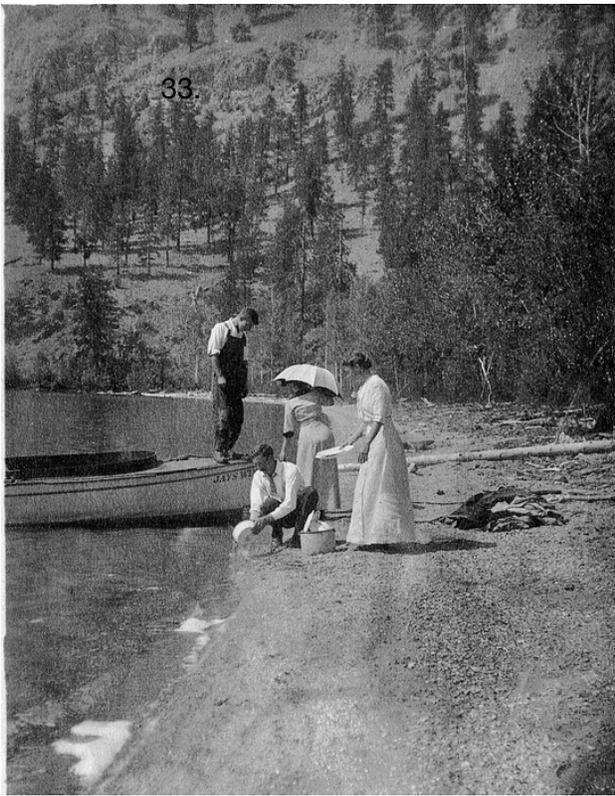
26. Garden Party, possibly a Kalamalka Women's Institute gathering



27. Boating on Kalamalka Lake



Sailing on Wood Lake



28. Picnic along Gear's Bay



29. KWI Gathering

A group of women came together to work on charitable causes, called the Kalamalka Women's Institute (KWI). In the long term it expanded to become a very successful organization Photo 29.

Harry, because of his musical bent and training, soon started and directed a choral group in Oyama. The churches also engaged him for three Sunday services timed so that he could go from one church to the other: Catholic, Anglican (Photo 32) and Methodist, later United Church. He was happy to get back to the organ music again but not so much the religious side of it because he had to sit through some lecturing on political differences between the churches expressed in the sermons which, to him seemed a departure from the purpose of a church service. But then he had the capacity to look at the other side of things and he did enjoy being at an organ keyboard again.

Oyama had an excellent drama director (Isabel Potheary) who brought along a very lively group that put on plays (Photo 30) and did well in local drama club competitions. Both Margery, using her artistic skills in designing and constructing play settings, Harry acting and to his own surprise enjoying it. The group entered B.C. competitions and fared well (Photo 31).



30. Oyama Drama Club Production



31. Award Night



32. Anglican Church





34. Another Community Garden Party



35. Painting by Margery of a sail boat built entirely by Harry and often sailed on Wood Lake with family and friends

## Community Life by 1925

The preceding shows that Oyama had soon developed an active community life by now. However, this story couldn't go much beyond 1925 because of the lack of information. Thus the story concludes with one of its favourite pass times: tennis. Kay loved the game and participated in matches with many neighbours such as the Towgood family up on the benches (Photo 36).



36. Tennis match at the Towgoods

## The Families Converge

Margery and Harry were engaged in 1923. However, it turned out to be a long engagement period for a number of reasons. First, given the furnace pipe incident still in mind, Harry was uncertain about how to approach Margery's father for his approval (a usual part in the etiquette of the day). Second, Harry was putting much effort and work into getting his mother and father comfortably settled: completing their house, starting and running his expanding trucking business and tending to the developing young orchard. A third problem, was that neither Harry's parents nor the newlyweds would be keen on sharing the same house.

It took some time to resolve these problems. William's agreement, the father-in-law to be, turned out all right. Some years later Harry and William, having drinks together, each admitted how nervous they had been about it and, with time, how happy both were with the union, and how wonderfully well it had knitted together two such different families. They became friends having many good times together, expanding years later into what eventually led to Kay and William having 9 grandchildren. The second drawback resolved itself. Harry's orchard routines improved and smoothed out and the trucking business had found a solid footing. Margery too was a great help with Harry's business receiving and placing orders, bookkeeping and related office work.

In 1926 Emily and Frederick started another store located on an easily accessed central village space in front of a pear orchard that Frederick and Harry had acquired on the east side of the school. What used to be the little white school house was moved onto the Aldred lot and opened as their new store (Photo 37). Harry moved the hand-cranked gasoline pump from his garage at home to the front of the store for the sale of gasoline as can be seen in the photo. The gas pump was much later donated to a museum in Vernon where it may still reside. Frank Rimmer who had bought their



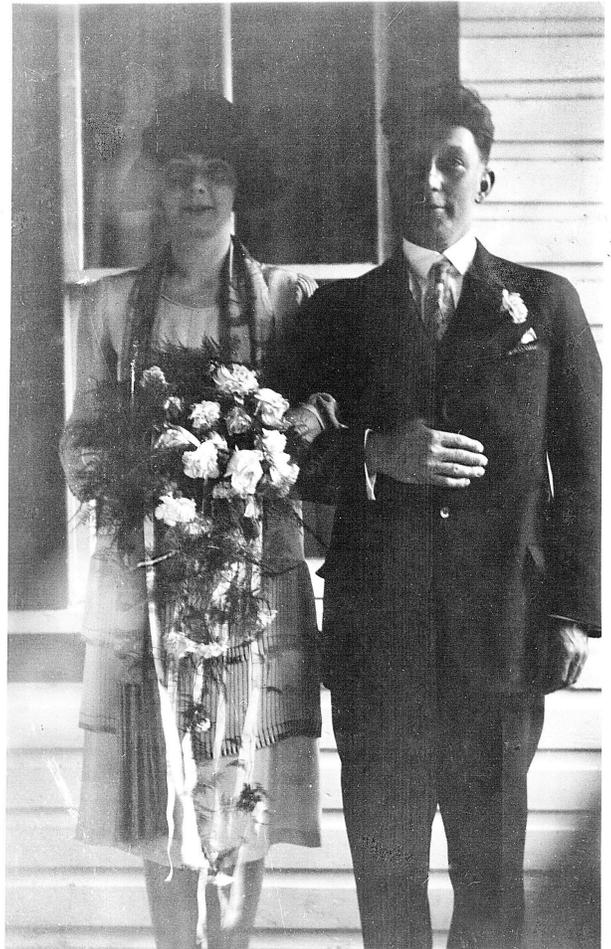
37. Oyama Store ca.1926

original store and post office in 1914, lived elsewhere in Oyama by this time and married and started a trucking business of his own. This competed a bit with Harry but later evolving from friendly competition to an association with plenty of work for both and where one would back the other in especially demanding periods such as harvesting time.

Having fully solved the three issues, Margery and Harry were eventually to celebrate their wedding on May 5, 1927 at Longacres (Photos 38 & 39).



38. Margery accompanied by her two sisters on the way to the wedding



39. Margery and Harry married May 5, 1927

### OYAMA CHURCH A LOVELY SETTING FOR THE WEDDING

Aldred-Dobson Nuptials Event  
of the Week—Archdeacon  
Greene Officiated

OYAMA, B. C., May 9.—The little church at Oyama was the setting for a very pretty wedding on May 5th when Miss Margery Kathleen Dobson was married to F. H. Aldred. The church had been beautifully decorated by Mrs. Ellison, Miss Miller and Miss Bell, with an arch of Spring blossoms over the bridal couple. The Rev. Archdeacon Greene officiated, assisted by Mr. Pearson, while Mr. DeBeck performed at the organ. The bride who was given away by her father looked charming in a dress of periwinkle blue with touches of gold and a hat of black and gold, and carried a bouquet of carnations and ophelia roses. She was attended by her sisters, the Misses Eileen and

by her sisters, the Misses Eileen and Patsy Dobson as bridesmaids, who wore peach colored frocks with blue poke hats trimmed with ribbon flowers and carrying roses and pink sweet peas. The groom was attended by Kenneth Dobson. The Archdeacon took co-operation as the foundation for his address to the young people. Following the ceremony a reception was held at the home of the bride, who together with the bridegroom received the felicitations of the numerous guests. The mother of the bride wore a dress of black and sandal-wood crepe de chine, trimmed with black silk fringe and a black hat with oriental embroidery, she carried a sheaf of willow iris. The bridegroom's mother was in black and white crepe de chine with a corsage of lilies of the valley. The guests inspected the many and useful presents. A beautiful three-tier wedding cake was cut by the bridal couple and their health was drunk after which the happy pair left in their car for the Coast, Mrs. Aldred wearing for her going away dress a tan suit of knitted silk and wool, with a black hat.

Their wedding was a very happy day for the couple, all the more so that the Dobsons and Aldreds celebrated the nuptials together (Photo 40).



40. The Dobson and Aldred families together shortly after the wedding  
Margery, Patricia, Harry, Emily, Kay, Frederick, William, Eileen, Ken

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