

## **A recollection of William Frederick Schwartz & Mary Ellen Nesbitt**

William Frederick Schwartz was born in Dresden, Germany in 1858. In 1864, he immigrated to Pontiac County, Quebec, Canada with his father, Francis Frederick Schwartz and his step-mother, Auguste Liebrecht. Auguste has been previously married twice in Germany and her two sons, from her second marriage to John Stender, Ferdinand (Fred) & Ernest, also accompanied them from Germany.

In 1884, William Frederick, married Mary Ellen Nesbitt in Shawville, Quebec. They had twelve children in total, 4 boys and 4 girls as well as 4 children who all died at an early age in Ottawa, Ontario. One of the children who passed, Edgar age 9, drowned in the Rideau Canal in Ottawa while on a family outing. William and Mary Ellen lived at Cawood and in Ottawa and William worked as a painter as well as a farmhand.

In 1905, William decided to go west to the newly formed province of Saskatchewan. His step-brother Fred Stender and his family had already settled at GapView in the south eastern corner of the province near what would become Moose Mountain Provincial Park in 1908. At the time, Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior for immigration from 1896 to 1905, induced a variety of agriculturally inclined European emigrants to Western Canada to settle prairie land around the transcontinental railway. Interestingly enough, William Frederick and Mary Ellen named one of their sons Clifford Sifton Schwartz.

William and his twin sons, Gilbert & Ernie, headed west while Mary Ellen, who was expecting at the time, stayed behind with Edith and Clifford. Irvin was born on Christmas day in 1905. Arthur, their eldest son, was established in Ontario and stayed working as a woodsman until his death in 1970 in Fort Frances, Rainy River District, Ontario. Mary Ellen and the rest of the children travelled to Saskatchewan in the spring once the Gap View homestead was made ready.

The Gap View farm, however, could not provide an adequate living. As crops continued to fail, William Frederick started looking for a more suitable location with better prospects. In the spring of 1909, he and the twins headed further west to the Assiniboia district located in the south central area of Saskatchewan and settled on land in the RM of Stonehenge #73, six miles northwest of what would eventually become the settlement and then village of Assiniboia. Mary Ellen was expecting again and Elsie Viola was born in August 1909 in Kisbey, Saskatchewan not far from Gap View. Meanwhile Edith, the eldest daughter, had met and married Dr. Fred Roluf in 1907 in Arcola, Saskatchewan.

When Elsie was approximately 3 weeks old, Mary Ellen, her sons, Clifford 6 and Irvine 5, left the Gap View area for the new homestead. They travelled by train to Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan and then by wagon, a distance of approximately 110 kilometres or 68 miles to the homestead.

Another daughter was born in 1911, Hazel Marie, on the new farm and the family was complete. William Frederick farmed until 1934 then he and Mary Ellen retired and moved into the town of Assiniboia. Elsie, her husband Dewey Gorius, and son Delmar stayed on the farm until 1937 at which time the farm was sold to the Berguson family and the original farmhouse was moved into Assiniboia to be utilized as a commercial business building.

William Frederick died in Assiniboia in 1937 without ever returning to eastern Canada. That same year, Dewey and Elsie moved a granary, after the sale of the farm, into Assiniboia to #305 – 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue East and converted it into a small family home. Mary Ellen, now a widow, moved in with them and took on the care of 5 year old Delmar while Elsie was busy travelling the country as a grass roots political organizer for the CCF, (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation).

Mary Ellen was a member of the local Baptist church and very involved with volunteer work via the church ladies' group. She often held tea for the ladies at the house and when Delmar's only son, Terrance Dale, was born in 1952, she loved and cared for him as she had Delmar all those years prior. She was often seen sitting in the garden in her low slung rocking chair singing and rocking to Terry on a summer's day. By now she wasn't strong enough to pick him up but they devised a method whereby he would scramble up into her lap to lay contentedly and listen to his great-grandmother's soothing voice.

Mary Ellen did have one opportunity to travel back East to see her son, James Arthur, whom she missed always and to visit with family and friends. She eventually suffered a debilitating stroke late in life which she found very frustrating as it affected the control of her speech and caused her knitting to turn out rather poorly at times. She passed in 1956 at the age of 92.

Mary Ellen was laid to rest in the Prairie Rest Cemetery on the outskirts of the town of Assiniboia. William Frederick, as always, is nearby.

This article was originally written by Elsie Viola Gorius (nee Schwartz) for inclusion in the book named The Schwartz Reunion 1858 - 1984 by Elizabeth Fierobin and published in 1985. Slight revisions were made in 2012 by D. Kim Gorius (Elsie's granddaughter).