

This PDF is Attachment 1, to a blog piece posted to marileewein.com on March 12, 2022 entitled

“The Adoption Witness: What Did Sandra Merry Really Say About Granddad?”

JAMES DICKSON: AN ANECDOTE and HIS SOULMATE BRIDE

Our Granddad, James Dickson (1882-1969) was a soft spoken man, a world traveler with interesting conversation entangled in ready dry wit. He was born in Scotland and emigrated to Canada where he rose from a hewer of coal to Chief Inspector of Mines for British Columbia. We knew he had spent time in Germany as a young lad, as part of his mining education, and fought in the Boer Wars. Still, he was adroit in avoiding personal family reference, and we were taught to respect his space.

That was what we knew, except for the following anecdote, so it became important to us. It was always suspect though, because Mum told it, never in his presence, and only when we were young such that she might try to cajole us, to put more elbow into a task.

Granddad and his two best buddies had parted ways, waving to each other enthusiastically, on the docks of Glasgow. Sometimes, they were as young as ten (that was the source of suspicion). Times were tough; each was leaving his home alone, destined for separate shores of success, in Australia, India and Canada.

TRUTH

We children were not entirely had by Mum’s anecdote because Granddad’s buddies may well have waived him off to Germany. However, that was not for an emancipation or emigration. Nor were the Boer Wars. Recent ancestry probes show he qualified for three decennial censuses by the time he finally left Scotland and was domiciled with his parents for all three! He emigrated in 1912, to Canada.

SANDRA MERRY VERSION

Sandra Merry, of the generation before us, gave a version of the anecdote to our sibling. Now, should it have been accurately reflected decades later by that sibling, it was based on her own recall of Granddad waving goodbye on the docks of Glasgow. The event included that he had proposed to her and had held up his emigration for her answer. However, she had another suitor to consider, and in time, had declined Granddad, on which he was departing for Canada, to marry Nana. It continued that she waited for her true love, as evidenced by old time military pictures on her bureau, but she never wed.

TRUTH

Sandra’s father was James Merry; who we knew as Granddad’s old Scottish friend. Her version gained interest when we found that James had spent decades in India, beginning sometime between 1901 and 1910. That confirmed Mum’s one to India and one to Canada, leaving to wonder, one to Australia.

Sandra shared Mum’s birth year; 1916. Granddad emigrated in 1912. Had there been an affair of the heart for Granddad in Sandra’s family before he wed Nana, then perhaps it was with her mother, or her father’s sister. They were his contemporaries. We ruled out her mother, as she was wed in India, in 1910.

Military pictures on Sandra’s bureau were probably correctly recollected. They may have been of a suitor, but she surely would have also remembered her brother, James, who was lost at sea, in 1942.

Since retells of old stories usually hold grains of truth and we were certain our grandparents were soulmates, we were eager for further analysis and opine.

NANA, AS GRANDDAD'S SOULMATE

Granddad may well have been nursing a bruised heart in his lead up to emigration. However, he was detained by the necessary objective of completing university classes to gain his Certificate in Mining, of First Class Competency toward a job offer in Nanaimo, B.C. He left within months of receiving it.

Anyway, it was highly unlikely that Granddad was holding Nana in a triangle interest at that time. She was his junior by over a dozen years and had already emigrated to British Columbia with her family, early in 1910. She was then fifteen, a shy girl, under her mother's strict Presbyterian thumb. He was twenty-eight. The families were said to have known each other in Hamilton, Lanarkshire before her departure. However, they lived miles apart such that acquaintance was likely of Church or mining.

James Dickson married Janet McArthur in Nanaimo, B.C., in 1915, suggesting their courtship began in Canada. Now, a groom of 33 would be expected to have weathered some affairs of the heart. Rather than consider herself second best, a bride would think such groom, lucky to have dodged the first bullet, to be available for the love of his life. Rest in peace, dear Nana bride.

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