

Carol M.

**Interview with Yvonne Penney** who lives on Highway 118 east of Carnarvon.

*Who were your ancestors, Yvonne?* Richard Fry was a blacksmith in Carnarvon, closer to where Highways 35 and 118 meet; it was on the edge of the swamp, the house was on what is now 118. He had a grocery store, Grandma had a large garden. I have one of her peony bushes out in my garden now.

On Hallo'een night, instead of candies Grandpa would save big pennies - I remember scrambling on that dirty floor to retrieve those pennies - it was a lot of fun.

Grandpa Fry came from England, and Grandma's people came from Ireland. He was a staunch Orangeman. They lived over the other side of Twelve Mile Lake for quite a few years and then moved over to the Week's property on Twelve-Mile right where the cottages are now. He sold all that property for \$2,500.00 - they didn't realize then what tourism would be today - who did!! The log cabin is still down there with his initials still in the stairs.

Grandpa Fry died on Christmas Day in 1932; Grandma Minnie Fry died in 1936. They lived a little farther down the road and we had a path through the woods to their place.

My parents, Eva and Clifford Harrison were married June 18, 1914. I imagine Eva's parents gave them this property where we are now - about 60 acres. Their marriage certificate is upstairs in a frame - it's a beautiful certificate so I took it to Haliburton to Perfect Prints, but it was all rolled up so it's got several marks on it. They just had a travelling Minister up here then - he came every once in a while.

*What was it like to grow up here?* This house was built 75 or 80 years ago. There were 10 of us - with one big room upstairs with beds all over the place - more like a dormitory. We were all home at one time; my older brother said that he went hunting one morning (they had brought a bed downstairs for Mother) and when he came home "There was another squalling brat" That was me!

There are only three of us left now - three girls - all the boys are gone. **Richard** was the eldest, he lived on Highway 35 across from the Millpond Restaurant and worked in the liquor store in Minden. **Orville** worked for County Roads; brother **Ken** was the youngest, he moved out to B.C. He married a girl here before he left; he died about 2 years ago.

The eldest girl is still alive in a Nursing Home in Peterborough - that's **Norma**. Then, **Evelyn** - she changed her name to June (well, we had an Aunt who changed her name to June, so my sister thought if Auntie could do it, so could she!) **Winnie** lived at Maple Lake,<sup>1</sup> then **Fern**, she lived in Bowmanville and was Manager of the Royal Bank down there; then she moved out to Edmonton and that's where she died about 3 years ago.

*Eileen lived  
in Hest  
Gifford*

And then Iris and myself; we used to fight - who would do the dishes. who would do this or that - we fought over everything! But now we get along fine - we were just typical kids. We used to go and pick strawberries in the fields up here, and we got smart and filled the bottom of the basket with leaves and put the berries over them and we'd come home and say "Here, Mom, here's a basket of strawberries". But she soon caught on to that idea - we had to fill the basket before we could go swimming and we were anxious to get going.

*What were Sundays like then?* Mom and Dad belonged to the Zion Church nearby; my dad was an Elder for years and they always attended church - and the kids always had to go to Sunday School; if you didn't have your shoes polished the night before, you wore them dirty! My dad was adamant about having your shoes clean. We didn't do anything on Sunday; even the potatoes were peeled the day before.

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*Tell me about your home life, Yvonne.* Nothing was easy back then; my Mother died at 56 - just from hard work! She had a wringer washer outside, but we had to heat the water inside on the wood stove and carry it out. We had a separator, and of course that had to be cleaned; we had cows and a horse. Before she had the washer, Mother had a scrub board and an old square tub. She'd be up early every morning making porridge - that was our staple in the morning - oatmeal porridge. She'd make it the night before and put it on the back of the stove in a double boiler. Maybe once a month we'd have a treat of cold cereal on Sunday morning. All the water we used we had to carry from the well, and of course, we had to fill the reservoir in the stove every night, too. Eventually we got a hand-pump inside, but that was many years later.

*What sort of transportation did your family have?* Mom and Dad moved here between 75 and 80 years ago. Dad never drove a car in his life - and he died in a car accident! He was riding with my brother over in Bracebridge; they had a little daschund with them and she was killed too. We don't know exactly what happened; my brother never got over it. He said he felt a hand on his shoulder at Dad's funeral, and that helped him somewhat.

*What were your meals like?* The boys and Dad hunted deer - that was our staple meat - over the winter. Mom used to put it in bottles and seal it. It was good that way with the jelly on it - and she made her own pork and beans - that was our favourite meal....venison and home made pork and beans. That's what we lived on - and faith! We hardly ever got beef. The men fished for trout in any of the lakes around - Boskung or Twelve Mile - winter or summer. Back in those days there were lots of fish.

We had our big meal at noon, but not in the winter time because Dad went off to the lumber camp in the winter time; Mom had all these children to look after and send off to school.. We all came home for lunch because we just went to the school up the road,

Our whole life revolved around that church. - we went to Sunday School; then on Friday nights it was off to Young Peoples - just fun and games and lots of singing. The Music teacher for the County was Mr. Ralph Hussey - there's a picture of him in the church. He did a lot for the children around here./ Without him we wouldn't have had much - he was great! He used to take us to Toronto on trips to the Kiwanis Music Festival, and he would drive his own car; there weren't many seat belts in those days so you weren't limited to a certain number of people

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Sinclair Russell had a dance hall up the road a little ways .I never got to go to the dances there as I was too young, but my older sisters and brothers went. I could hear the music from upstairs in the bedroom.

We never had a car, you see, so we never got to Minden or anywhere. My brother-in-law Winnie's husband - he was such a nice man - he had an old DeSoto and he used to take up every once in while up to Algonquin Park for the day. That was a real trip! We'd make ice cream in the ice-cream maker and we'd pack a lunch...what a treat that was.

We ate well, and certainly never went hungry.

We had a small hospital in Minden - a Red Cross Hospital - Dr. Agnes Jamieson was the doctor, and she came up here for everything - she'd even ski if she had to get to a patient. She would do anything for you - she was a wonderful woman - and she was just a little wee thing, too! There was diphtheria in the area for a while, and I know my Mother was concerned about it, but we never caught it. I've always had good health - up til now, anyway. No broken limbs or anything serious like that.

Years later when Dad was living here alone he fell downstairs - our steps were very steep! I had come home for a week to visit him, and one night he fell down all those 14 stairs; he didn't break anything, but it was such a scare.

That sideboard was Mother's pride and joy; I've had it refinished. We were not allowed in the living-room - or parlour - unless we had company.

*Did you have other young people near you?* There were two families of Cowans: the Jim Cowans lived up the hill - they had 10 children; and then there was Bob Cowan up the other hill - and there were 12 of them. At this one-room school we had one teacher for years - Norman Brown's wife. She taught me from Grade 3 to Grade 8; I skipped two grades. My brother used to go up and start the fire in the morning; she had a strap, and every time she would strap anyone, he would cut an inch off the strap - until she had nothing left!. She went through quite a few straps. We walked to school even when there was lots of snow - it didn't seem to hurt us.

~~to school~~, so it wasn't far away. It wasn't lunches she had to worry about. Mom baked her own bread and we had a big garden - potatoes, carrots, turnips - any of those things that would keep. We didn't have many green vegetables in the winter. Mom always made a big pot of soup and she preserved a lot of berries. We had a dug-out basement and that's where they kept everything. I remember picking potato bugs, too, and there were lots of them! We put them in coal coil and that would kill them.

*Where would your Mother shop?* We bought our staples from Tom Rogers' store - over where the Hair Lounge is now. Tom Rogers had it, and then his son Clayton took over, and then it was sold to Gord Allcorn who was a favourite of mine. He was a great man. We bought beans, flour, sugar - everything came in hundred-weight bags, and I'm sure we used to get some bargains because he knew what it was like to have a bunch of kids - he only had two boys.

Dad had a bit of a farm here and grew food for the cows, and we had a horse named Napoleon, and we had chickens. My Mother mostly milked the cows twice a day, along with everything else she had to do - especially when Dad was away all winter. She made her own butter and buttermilk - on a warm day that drink was a real treat. We were pretty much self-sufficient except for flour, sugar and beans.

Mom would have a big pot on the wood stove - for jam making and preserving - and that was our warmth, too. There was an oil stove in the parlour, but it wasn't lit very often as it was too expensive, and we children were never allowed in the parlour unless there was some company.

We had two apple trees, crab apples and ordinary apples. Mom preserved the crab apples whole and served them around the roast. We didn't have a freezer, of course, but we kept the venison and anything else hanging up in the woodshed. Nothing would keep in the warm weather, but the boys hunted even in the Spring; the Game Warden knew them and knew they had to hunt for food, so he turned the other way. We had rabbit stew, and we had our own chickens; later on my brother raised turkeys. We ate well, and certainly never went hungry.

Then my oldest brother started working on Highway 35, and they had camps so he stayed there and came home on weekends.

*What would Christmas be like?* During the Depression I remember there were times we never got anything except a dish of nuts and an orange - a real treat. I do remember one Christmas there was a green tam down at the store, and Oh, I coveted that tam! My brother bought that for me for Christmas and I was so thrilled to have a tam to wear to church.

*Was there a polio scare up here when you were young?* Yes, there was a young girl up here who contracted it and the Red Cross helped her and eventually she got an artificial leg, but she always walked with a bit of a limp. Our family managed to stay healthy - we were outside playing all the time, even in the snow.

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*Do you have some things of your Mother's?* A few plates and a lovely platter, and upstairs is a washstand. This sideboard was Mother's pride and joy - it was in the parlour so it was out of bounds for the children. I've had a refinished and it has many happy memories.