

Emma Woodward-Cook

By Barrie Cook

Emma Woodward was born on a farm in Ontario in May of 1873 and was a babe in arms when her father, Henry Woodward, loaded her and the rest of her family onto a train the next year to follow his older brothers, William and Thomas, to the West Coast.

In the fall of 1862, William Woodward, a Wesleyan missionary, was assigned to be a circuit rider, a travelling preacher, in British Columbia. He started west but was slowed by illness in the family and spent two winters in Toledo, Iowa. In April 1864, William and family headed off again and met younger brother Thomas at Council Bluffs, Iowa, start of the Oregon Trail.

After weeks of slow travel by oxen (William) and horses (Thomas) and coping with begging Indians and larcenous whites along the way, they arrived in California. William became sick and died in California. Thomas farmed for several years but was threatened by a horse thief he helped send to prison so he packed up his family again and sailed north to British Columbia.

Back in Ontario, Henry was farming and producing children. His first wife, Deborah Griffin, gave him a son, who died soon after birth, and four daughters, Sarah, Eleanor, Maria and Alice. Deborah died in 1863 and the next year Henry married Rachel Tarzwell, who produced Deborah Etta, William Emerson, Francis, Joseph, Emma and James Malcolm, who died in the First World War.

By the time Henry decided to move west with his family (except Sarah, who was 22 and stayed in Ontario), it was clear he didn't have to suffer the rigours of the Oregon Trail: By 1830, people in North America had taken note of what was going on in Britain and had begun building railways of their own. Local railway lines flourished through the eastern United States. Construction on a transcontinental railway started in 1863 and was finished in 1869.

The trip across America by train was a lot easier for Henry and his family. One of Henry's daughters, Maria (Mrs. George Clapperton), was quoted in a news report: "In the spring of 1874 we moved to B.C. We took the train from London to Sarnia and thence across the continent to Sacramento. From San Francisco, we went by boat . . ."

That "thence" covers a lot of territory. Some details might be useful: Entrepreneurs in Montreal decided about 1830 or so to build a railway west to tap the wealth they figured was in western Ontario. By 1860, the Grand Trunk Railway was complete to Sarnia. There, the Woodwards would have crossed the St. Clair River (probably by train ferry; the first train tunnel wasn't completed until 1891) to Port Huron, Michigan. They had to switch to a train that would take them to Council Bluffs, Iowa, to the "Pacific Railroad". That was the Union Pacific line, which connected them to the Central Pacific, which delivered them to Sacramento, where they switched to the Western Pacific Railroad for the 132-mile (212-kilometer) trip to Oakland.

In San Francisco, they boarded the steamer Pacific for passage to Victoria (four days and nights at sea) where, because of the lack of accommodation, Henry left his family in a large house they had to share with another family, while he checked out Lower Nicola (near Merritt), where Thomas had settled.

So, it was still 1874 and they had reached British Columbia. William, a decade earlier, had taken two years just to get to California. You can blame illness for that. Thomas and his family made it in one long, slow year.

And Emma was still only a year old.

According to her brother Francis, who would have been almost four years old when it happened, in the spring of 1875 they took the side-wheeler Yosemite to New Westminster, then the steamer Wm. Irving to Yale, the head of navigation, where they first took a Cariboo stage to Spences Bridge (then known as Cook's Ferry). There they joined a pack-train for the 35-mile (56-kilometer) trip to Nicola Valley which took two days. Henry purchased a homestead from T. Carrington and the family settled into their new home.

Emma was a friendly, high-spirited girl who was wooed by a couple of local youths before she was swept off her feet by the older, sophisticated businessman who had come to Nicola looking for a bride. She was 19, Foxcrowle Percival Cook of Granite Creek was 31 when the two married on June 15, 1892.

She returned to Nicola for the birth of her first two daughters, Adeline and Emily, but the others — Frances, Eda and Agnes — were born in Granite Creek. Frances was three and a half years old when she pulled a pot of boiling water over on herself and died. She was the first Cook in the cemetery at Granite Creek.



Foxcrowle, Eda, Adeline, Emma, and Emily Cook
ca. 1904.

Emma was 39 years old when she had her last child — a boy, Edward. This was a big deal for F.P., whose family put great stock in having sons to carry on the name, and he rewarded the

doctor who helped in the boy's birth with \$100, a huge sum in 1912. Emma's reward, presumably, was the satisfaction that she had finally given birth to a son.

She was a full partner in the marriage. She brought up the children and kept the garden. When F.P. was away in England, she ran the hotel in Granite Creek, the post office and telephone exchange. After his death in 1918, she supervised his businesses with Perley Russell, manager of the store in Princeton. When she couldn't find a reliable manager for the store in Coalmont in the 1930s after daughter Adeline and her husband, Wes Rossiter, who had been with the store off and on since 1912, moved to Oliver to operate a fruit farm, she ran it herself until her son Edward was old enough to take it over.

**Foxcrowle standing,
Emma behind
carriage, Adeline at
the reins with Agnes
beside her and Emily
holding Edward.
Photo in front of
their home at
Granite Creek.
ca 1913.**



When Edward was still a teenager, though, in 1928, she got him to drive her north to visit her second daughter, Emily, who had married teacher Jack Clotworthy. They were living in Telkwa, near Smithers. (Her younger daughters were either living at home or close by. Eda, a nurse at the Princeton hospital, later married Ray Wanless, a telegraph operator for the CPR, and Agnes married Jack Rhodes, a mechanic and garage owner in Princeton.) Ed did all the driving that summer but he was accompanied by his best friend, Fred Waterman. They ended up with unbalanced tans: Ed's left arm and Fred's right were deeply tanned, their other arm pale by comparison.

In the late 1930s, in her sixties, Emma retired to a comfortable house on at least two lots on Fenchurch Avenue in Princeton. One of the lots was half taken up with a garden where she grew the same vegetables and flowers she had had at Granite Creek. At the back of the yard was a substantial woodshed where she cut the wood she needed to heat her home and cook her meals.

She was a soft touch and the old prospectors and loggers who knew her from Granite Creek and Coalmont were sure of getting something to eat and a few coins for digging over her garden or chopping firewood. She also had no objections to an indigent sleeping overnight in her shed as long as he didn't smoke. She had been burned out by a fire in 1907 that destroyed most of Granite Creek and now she was cautious.

During the Second World War, Emma and Adeline travelled to Ontario by train to visit her brother Frank and her daughter Agnes, who had moved to be with her husband. Jack Rhodes had joined the Royal Canadian Air Force and been assigned to the RCAF Technical Training School in St. Thomas, Ont.

About 1950, Emma moved to Oliver to live in a little house beside that of Adeline. Independent to the last, she still cut her own firewood and cooked her own meals unless invited to the big house. She died in Oliver on Aug. 13, 1957, at age 84.



In her 80's, Emma Cook in 1956 was still cutting firewood for her little house in Oliver.

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