

# Nootka Street



Muriel Watt

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Title page

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## MEMOIR

These are my memories. Collected with portraits inspired from a box of black and white snapshots, pored over across the years, in my effort to put faces to the stories I heard growing up. Most were photos of relatives I would never meet. Many were tiny and poorly focussed, so likenesses were left to my creative imagination.

I intended this to be a collection of mother and child paintings. Soon I realized there were no photos of me and my mother. At first this seemed sad and maybe neglectful. But I had photos of myself, many were portraits taken at The Bay on Granville Street. Rather than the absent mother child snapshots suggesting neglect, I decided that my mother was often the one taking the pictures, which accounted for her not holding me in any, nor being the subject. I may have carried that tradition over as a mother myself. Both resenting that there are “no nice pictures of me” but then complaining when I see myself in one. Why would anyone offer to take my picture knowing that reaction? But maybe she didn’t feel entitled to be in them. I hope not. Maybe she was attempting to record and send photos home to “the old country” from her new place, Nootka Street, Vancouver, Canada.

My father was a warm, intelligent and generous man but never really had many friends in Canada. He went to work everyday until he turned 65, June 18, 1968. He had work acquaintances that he spoke of, many recent immigrants from Czechoslovakia or Yugoslavia. He trained them to make chain using blacksmithing skills he acquired over a seven year apprenticeship in Scotland, and a long career there and in Canada. He expressed some resentment that these young guys learned to make chain quickly promoting them to a high “piecework” rate while he was hanging on at the end of a “dying trade”. I remember watching him from the back deck he had built, to our bulky house on Nootka Street, walking up the back lane on a glorious early summer afternoon as he carried his retirement gift of a standing ashtray and a carton of cigarettes. That was it for Tom Watt, working blacksmith for 51 years.

I decided this would be my place to anthologize the stories that were shared, mostly by my father, although my mother was a great teller of tales herself.

I spent many evenings in Nootka Street listening to my father, as he hugged the long radiator in the dining room, mug of tea nearby, often accompanied by a toast and cheese sandwich or “piece” as they called it.

My mother was usually “out and about” at one of her ladies auxiliary meetings or visiting a neighborhood friend soon after getting dinner on the table for my Dad at 4:30. “I’m away then” she would call as she made her escape. The older siblings were married or off at work and I was in some ways like an only child.

My mother seemed to adapt to life in Canada more readily than Dad. She made friends easily, learned to smoke cigarettes with them and got on with it. Maybe from her life growing up in a small Scottish village, life in a Canadian neighborhood filled with other new immigrants and young Canadian housewives was not that different?

My story is about being the go between in these two worlds and then becoming an immigrant myself. As a 19 year old teenage “bride”, leaving for Madison Wisconsin in August 1968, I doubt I appreciated that the route I was taking, and the implications and consequences of the decisions I made so glibly at the time, would affect and change me forever.

These are the tales and the faces as I remember and render them.

revised August 15, 2023

Nootka Street must have seemed a strange name to “the folk in the old country” when Jenny and Tom sent their first blue aerogramme letter home. Jenny arrived in Vancouver after sailing from Liverpool to Halifax, sometime in the summer of 1947. Jenny would describe her father, Granda Marshall hanging on to the door of the bus, crying as she climbed aboard at St Andrew’s station in Edinburgh with her three kids in tow, accompanied by Auntie Lily, wife of my Dad’s youngest brother Eddie. The strains of the assembled family singing “We’re no awa’ tae bide awa’” brought tears to everyone as the bus pulled away. “It would bring tears to a glass eye” was laconically joked thereafter when anyone told a sad tale in the family. Jenny retold this story on every relevant anniversary of the exodus, often as etched in my memory, while I listened earnestly over breakfast at the 50’s formica and steel kitchen table before heading to school.

She would say she was told their destination was Toronto, while back in Edinburgh she packed up and sold their flat. She learned that Tom had decided to move on to the more temperate climes of coastal B.C. upon his arrival in Ontario several months earlier. “Knocking your pan out” as he would call his work, seemed less wearying in Vancouver than in the humid summer temperatures of Toronto, where his brothers Willie and Eddie had settled.

It is hard to imagine that Jenny did not realize that the agreed on plan to live in Toronto had been amended somewhere between my father’s sudden departure and her arrival several months later, without her being included in the decision. But that is how I remembered her telling it. And in the days before quick cell phone and Facetime communication was common place, I guess that was so.

It was still difficult to acquire passage to Canada relatively soon after the end of The War, but Tom and his youngest brother Eddie, successfully made their way on a converted troop ship to New York, in early spring 1947. Dad hurriedly arranged to take this opportunity and Jenny remained to sell off everything and join him in Toronto later. But somewhere on his journey he decided to keep going to Vancouver. It certainly made for a more dramatic rendition, and Jenny loved embroidery in service of a good tale.

Maybe Dad took to heart Granda Watt’s observation when he visited during Tom’s first excursion to Canada in the 1920’s. Dad loved to tell how one day while he was at work, Granda Watt answered the phone, “Yes, this is Tom Watt” and accepted a job intended for Thomas Fair Watt (the younger) to work on the Welland Canal. This would be how Granda Watt spent his entire summer holiday. They were both blacksmiths named Tom Watt so Granda signed on and learned what it meant to “knock your pan in” over a typically hot, humid Ontario summer, earning some pocket money in return. His comment “this is no a white man’s climate, Tom” went down in the annals of family folk lore despite its western ethnocentrism and fairly overt racial overtones.

The stories told were always about the family “back home”. Home and family meant Scotland despite our tight little nuclear unit in Vancouver. And I was the “wee Canadian”.

I often wondered egotistically if I was the happy surprise that made the connection to Canada more legit? Or more likely, was I “the mistake” as my mother would relish introducing me to her friends in the Ladies’ Auxiliary, Sons of Scotland, the Eagles or to a new neighbor she met walking back from the nearby store where she liked her daily “meet and greets”. She did not take into account my big ears trying to process the undertones and implications of the adult women’s “blethering” and laughing with each other. Either she thought I wouldn’t notice the double entendre or overlooked my being “too sensitive”, because it was worth the wee laugh it generated to suggest I was “the mistake”.

I preferred the alternate version of my surprise arrival close to nine months after my parents reunion. That version went that it “kept them young” to have a new “wee yin” in the family. But this would also remind me that my parents were so old when I arrived, even though nowadays a 38 year old mother and 45 year old father is not unusual. And if they were older than everyone else’s parents by at least 10 years, did that mean they would die sooner? That worried me.

It is undoubtedly true that I was not planned for, but perhaps none of their children had been? They attempted to adjust to their new reality having left a world that was relatively secure financially, and emotionally supported by family and familiar surroundings. The whirl of moving into a house my father was building before the family got off the train, while also working on the waterfront at B.C. Marine, enrolling kids in schools, navigating a new world, dealing with all of it, and having a new baby definitely had not been in the picture. I would wonder often whether they concluded it had all been worth it in the end?

# JENNY

Juniper Green, 1931

This portrait is from a studio photo of Janet Helen Marshall at or near her 21st birthday May 1, 1931. She would proudly give her entire “moniker” whenever the opportunity allowed, preferring it over the more familiar Jenny, which everyone called her.

I’m not sure of the date. I know she was proud of the photo when it was taken from the box. Maybe it was precipitated by a special occasion. She is elegantly coiffed and her dress is something she might have worn to sing in the choir at St. Margaret’s church in Juniper Green where Granda Marshall was “the beadle”. A beadle in the Church of Scotland assists the minister in church services. Granda and Granny Marshall also assiduously performed caretaker/janitor services at the church, much as Jenny and Tom did at the Renfrew Community Center down the road from our house in Vancouver. A job that “brought in a few extra coppers”.

A favorite Jenny story of growing up in the church community was her arrival at a choir practice after everyone was assembled together at the front. As she makes her entrance in the story’s frequent retelling, one of her admirers bursts into:

“Ain’t she sweet. See her coming down the street.

Now I ask you very confidentially, ain’t she sweet?”

The song was a popular radio hit in 1927 when Jenny was 17. I am sure Jenny savored the recollection as much as she enjoyed prancing around the kitchen singing the song spiritedly with her right hand coyly cocked in the air. And I sat crunching my Special K cereal, watching her. She loved telling that story!

Jenny would announce herself “The Queen of the May” on her birthday every May 1. I imagine as a school girl she anticipated that role keenly each year, with everyone gathered around the Maypole in the school yard.

Jenny certainly would not have looked as “done up” as her portrait, going off to her job at the McVitie’s biscuit factory where she worked after leaving school at 14. She seemed to have enjoyed this work however, and it’s easy to imagine her gossiping and laughing with the other “lassies” and earning her own money for the first time. I have an image of Lucy and Ethel on the chocolate factory conveyer belt floor as it speeds up and they start shoving chocolates in their mouth to keep up. Jenny was “a character”, and was not far off this comic mold.

My parents would have met not long after this picture was taken. They met at “a dance” somewhere in or near Juniper Green or maybe Edinburgh itself, soon after Tom returned home after 7 years in Canada living with his brother Willie and wife Kate in St. Catherine’s, Ontario

Tom immigrated to Canada the first time in 1924, celebrating his 21st birthday “in the middle of the Atlantic”. He described walking across the bridge to Buffalo NY and back at night. No visa or official papers required in those days it seems. Google maps today says you can drive there in 43 minutes or bus in 2 1/2 hours. I doubt he had a car so maybe there was a bus he walked to?

Later he ventured further afar to work in Detroit (in the Ford Motor Company) and Chicago, While in Chicago he had fantasies of driving to San Francisco with a pal who had “bought an old jalopy”. But when they awoke on the morning of the planned trip, with a foot of snow already on the ground in Chicago, they went back to bed and Tom never did get to see San Francisco.

Tom returned to Scotland in 1932. The depression had begun and “work was drying up” . And his mother was ailing in Edinburgh.

Uncle Willie and Auntie Kate remained in Ontario. Their son, another Tom Watt, was 10 years younger than my Dad, and near in age to Uncle Eddie. He joined the Royal Air Force and would stay with my Dad during the war when he was on leave. He was killed in a training flight over Wales early in the war. Their daughter Mary died in childbirth in St. Catherine’s shortly after her brother’s death. Mary’s son was another Tom.

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JENNY

## JENNY and BETTY

Edinburgh 1933

It is an intimate experience to spend a couple of hours staring at an old photo wishing for greater detail while trying to render a likeness.

This portrait is taken from a small blurred snapshot of Jenny holding Betty among the gang of Watts at a campsite in the Pentland Hills. My mother is just 23 years and Betty born June 3, 1933 barely a few months old.

My mother would have four more children including a daughter Eleanor, born about 16 months after Betty. She was delivered at the Elsie Ingalls Hospital which was a “women’s hospital” and when Eleanor became ill during the night , the doctor refused to come to the house which would have been usual at the time. According to my father the doctor was prejudiced that the baby had been delivered at “the women’s hospital”. So my father had to bundle Eleanor up (maybe in the shawl my mother knit?) and “ran with her up to the Royal Infirmary” which at the time was located near the Meadows on the other side of Princes Street. She died of pneumonia there at six weeks old.

Due to this trauma, my mother refused to go to the hospital when my brother Tom was born 3 years later, preferring a home birth. This became more difficult than anticipated when he was a breech delivery. Tom’s birth story was cause for frequent repetition over the years. It included Granny Marshall’s admonition to “hold on to the bedpost and push”. A difficult image to recall when I was anticipating my own delivery experience 40 years later.

Whether or not this image resembles my mother at this time, painting her let me imagine the family together, putting up their tents (where did they get them?) building a fire to make pots of tea, singing and telling stories around a campfire after “the bairns” were asleep. It brought back memories of our Sons of Scotland picnics at various locales near Vancouver in the 50’s. We would bring the china cups and saucers and teapots wrapped in tea towels and tucked in a cardboard box along with meat pies, scones and potato salad. No paper plates or cups, no plastic bags or wheeled cooler bins.

I wonder how they all got to the campground? On the map, the Pentland Hills park looks very close to Edinburgh but since none of the family had a car it could have involved piling on a bus. Again reminiscent of the Sons of Scotland picnic trips to Peace Arch Park in Blaine or Bowen Island or Stanley Park. I learned and joined in the Scottish songs everyone sang along the way. These included drinking songs like “I Belong to Glasgow” and “A wee deoch and doris” (meaning farewell drink at the door). The chorus always finished up with “We’re no awa’ tae bide awa’” as the bus pulled into the picnic site. Lots of sentimental Scottish immigrants in the crowd. Then everyone poured out and got ready for their tea and the three legged races.

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11.8.17  
MWH

JENNY+BETTY

## BETTY and ME

Nootka Street, Vancouver

Not following any orderly sequence, here is my sister Betty holding me, most likely on the day I was brought home from Vancouver General Hospital. I was born there on October 19, 1948. Betty would be 15.

I used to tell my friends she was only 14 years older because it embarrassed me and I guess I figured knocking a year off sounded better. Betty was in many ways “a second mother” for me, in the best sense of that term. Not that my mother was not loving or proud of me at times, but she was very social, preoccupied with the clubs she joined and cementing connections in this new world where she had landed.

As I painted the detail of the shawl my mother had knit for me, I realized that it was the same pattern she made when Heath was born. She made one for all her firstborn grandchildren. It is possibly my most precious possession.

And when did she find time to make this shawl? She didn't get a t.v. set for another 6 years. I remember her knitting Heath's shawl with her “programs” playing as her sight was failing just before her raging diabetes was diagnosed. She marked her spot on the complicated pattern with her pencil carefully, although she had knit it many times before.

Betty is standing on the unfinished cement steps at Nootka Street with the unplastered, chicken wire covered walls behind her. They had been able to move in from their “hotel” on Cordova Street only weeks before my arrival. Betty wears a kilt that probably came with her from Scotland, and her hair has a cute teenage curl achieved no doubt with nightly pincurls.

I always thought Betty was so pretty. I told her once, when I was maybe ten standing in her kitchen on Imperial Drive in Burnaby, that she looked like Elizabeth Taylor! She howled with laughter in her trademark hysterical cackle! She was the best audience for a joke even when it might have been somewhat at her own expense. She loved laughing with everyone, was a great cook and hostess and took care of all of us. Including my parents. She was the oldest and was pulled from her life in Edinburgh at the vulnerable, formative age of 14. Leaving lots of friends behind, she stayed in touch with them as “pen pals”. She had many pen pals from the American and Canadian soldiers my parents billeted at their flat on Brunswick Street during The War. They would pass on addresses of younger cousins or siblings and Betty would start up a correspondence. One of these pen pals was named Muriel which is how I got my name when Betty was given the honor of christening the new baby. She would eventually meet up with her Edinburgh friends as a grown wife and mother when she returned years later with Max. She also met an American penpal from Illinois, when she visited me in Madison, Wisconsin.

But Betty had a melancholy side. She would retreat to her couch in her bathrobe early in the morning before anyone was up, or late at night in bed reading through her stack of library books replenished regularly from whatever library she was near. When she travelled anywhere later in her life, and she never travelled light, her suitcase was filled with hardback biographies in their library covers.



## GRANNY WATT and UNCLE WILLIE

Edinburgh, circa 1894

Granny Watt was born Ellen Monaghan in Edinburgh August 29, 1868 to Catherine Mellon and Peter Monaghan, both of Irish descent but also born in Edinburgh environs. She married Granda Watt on June 26, 1890 when she would have been 21.

Here she is with her first born Uncle Willie, named for Granda Watt's father William Watt. I took liberties with the sepia or tiny black and white photo references, adding color to hair, eyes and clothing. I don't know if Granny had ginger hair but I think it suits her and there are lots of gingers in our family so maybe it comes from her. Granny is dressed for this formal portrait occasion in a smart dress to the floor, with contrasting cuffs and bowed collar.

Uncle Willie was 10 years older than my Dad which would mean he was born in 1893. He looks about a year old here so Granny would have been about 24.

Willie was the first of 11 children born to Granny and Granda Watt. My Dad explained that "the children were born 2 years apart, boy, girl, boy, girl like a staircase". He would hold up one of his very long, straight blacksmith fingers, touching it with the opposite hand as he recited all their names: "Willie, Katie, Peter, Ellen (Nellie), Tom, Mary, Jim, Marjory (Madgie), Margaret (Maggie) and Eddie". It seems that the boy girl order as I'm writing this is off, with two girls before Uncle Eddie, the youngest. But my Dad would end the list of names emphasizing that he "was smack in the middle of 10". He himself had been preceded by a previous baby Thomas, who died as an infant. But when Granny turned up pregnant again not long after, and had another wee boy, he was named Thomas too. No superstitions I guess and because you had to be sure to get a Tom in there to keep the patriarchal naming tradition in order? But how do you do that? Survive the grief of losing a baby and then find yourself pregnant with another baby boy and give him the same name?

"Look on the sunny side, always on the sunny side" another favorite ditty of the time.

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## GRANNY WATT and UNCLE EDDIE

EDINBURGH 1914

Life carries on it seems and babies keep coming. By 1913 Granny had her last child, Uncle Eddie. She must be around 45 years in this picture. Ten years younger than my Dad, Eddie would accompany Tom on the second trip to Canada, not long after WW 2 had ended. Eddie served in the second war and came out of it relatively unscathed. Besides Peter, Eddie was the only other of the Watt sons to serve in the military.

Uncle Peter, reportedly something of a socialist and maybe even a rabble rouser going to labor demonstrations in the years leading up to The Great War as my Dad would relate. Peter served in WW 1. He survived the experience, only to die shortly after he came home, from a “kidney problem he caught in the trenches”. “Nephritis” my Dad would comment grimly as he told the sad history.

Granny Watt, the youngest of 10 children was raised a Catholic by her Scots-Irish parents who lived at 306 Lawnmarket when she was born. She enrolled her first born Uncle Willie in the local Catholic school until Granda Watt got wind of it and pulled him out and put him into the public school. He was not having his son in the Catholic school.

Peter, named for Granny Watt’s brother who was 10 years older than her, had an only son, also named Peter, who died of a similar kidney disorder after serving in the Second War. When Betty expressed that she liked the name Peter and would consider it if she had a son, my Dad disabused her of that idea quickly, repeating the sad story of the two Peters in the family.

The reference for this picture is another professional family portrait taken on the occasion of Uncle Willie’s marriage to Auntie Kate. My father remembered the day well, as each of the family were dressed in their finest and marched down (maybe in a straight line?) to the photographer’s studio, possibly on Princes Street. He remained impressed all the many years later, that his parents were able to get the family all together to make such an impressive photo.

The older ones were starting to leave the nest now, making it a little less crowded at home. But Granny, (whom her children often called Jockie, a nickname Granda Watt (Watty had given her) undoubtedly still had lots to keep her busy.

My Dad loved and admired her very much. He described her years of carrying prams and children up and down the five flights of stairs to their top front flat at 1 Barony Place which had “a view all the way down to Leith and over to Fife”. The washing was done down in the back “area” along side the other women, and with all of the older ones going off to work, the boys to the machinist or blacksmith trades and the girls to the various printing or bookmaking jobs Edinburgh was celebrated for, they would have produced a lot of washing to be carried up and down. It had to have been an all day operation. In addition there were daily trips to the market for groceries to prepare supper for all of them. My father would attempt the ploy of acting nonchalant looking out the window as she doled out the rations to the many plates. She would call loudly to him “Don’t think you’ll be getting any more Tam looking out the window!”

My father described Granny experiencing the affects of early thyroid treatment with new medicines for which prescribed dosages were still not understood. She became very “stout” as she appears here, and then “shrunk away down to a wee smatchet”. I looked up smatchet and it seems it refers to “a scamp, rascal, a little rogue, or a pert, mischievous child”. Although there seem to be negative connotations to the definitions, I doubt my father intended such, except to say that she became very tiny after having put on much weight. It seems that her condition was never really stabilized. Granny died in 1943 in her 75 year. An old age for someone who bore 11 children, buried two and worked hard diligently every day taking care of her family.





## GRANNY MARSHALL and BETTY

Edinburgh, 1933

Here is Granny Marshall, born Elizabeth Reid Farquar on September 8, 1877 at Redhall Railway Cottages in Collinton. Her father John Farquar “quarryman” registered her birth along with her mother’s father Robert Reid. Granny Marshall’s mother Elizabeth Reid, a “domestic servant” was 20 years old at the time. Her death is recorded a few weeks after giving birth to Granny, when she walked into the Union Canal and drowned. This was another tale my mother retold frequently at the kitchen table. It must have haunted her as it has come to haunt me.

I often wondered if my mother was exaggerating the melodrama as she told of her Granny “wrapping Granny Marshall in her shawl and leaving her on the grass and walking in to the water”. But I looked up the birth and death certificates myself. No need to exaggerate, it was sad enough with the facts as stated.

The suggestion was that the baby was born out of wedlock, but John Farquar signs (or is named) on the the birth certificate as her father. I did not find a marriage certificate so presumably the birth was registered after Granny, Elizabeth Reid Farquar was born and her mother Elizabeth Reid had walked into the Union Canal and drowned herself on September 28, 1877.

Did she put rocks in her pockets like Virginia Wolff, I wonder? How overwhelmed must she have been at the shame of her situation? I’ve read that in the 19th century, drowning was a common response to finding one’s self with child and alone.

Her father Robert Reid a “railroad plate layer” was at least there to sign the birth certificate of his granddaughter. Her mother Susan Addison Reid’s name appears on her daughter’s death certificate. And John Farquar is on both the birth and death certificates. But so many unanswered questions. Great Granny Elizabeth Reid was listed as a domestic servant. Her daughter Granny Marshall (was taken in and raised in the home of Granny Hosburgh, along with Granda Marshall who was 6 years her senior, and 17 years later would become her husband?

For many years the story was titillating and mildly humorous almost a hundred years after the tragic tale. It was also confusing, with lots of loose ends. How were they related?

It turns out that Granny Hosburgh (there are many spellings of her surname) was also a domestic servant. John Farquar appears on Granny and Granda Marshall’s marriage certificate dated 1894, as “alive” and his date of birth recorded as 1825 would make him 52 years old when Lizzie (Granny Marshall) was born, and 32 years older than Lizzie’s mother. Could John Farquar have been her employer as well as Lizzie’s father? Whatever the circumstances, it does not sound like a match made in heaven.

Was John Farquar “doing the right thing” by putting his name on the baby’s birth certificate? Or was he shamed into it by Robert Reid, the despondent Elizabeth’s father? And how did Granny Hosburgh assume the responsibility for the infant when she already had a young fatherless son already?

Here is Lizzie about 56 years later, holding “wee Betty” named for her and her mother. Liz is a big strong woman and a proud, beloved member of her community as reported in the obituary posted in the St. Margaret’s parish church when she died in Juniper Green shortly after my mother had left for Canada. She is fondly remembered in a church obituary, “before she gave up her work, seated in that well known chair in the Session House presiding over her “wards” who were sometimes little children and at other times much bigger ones—but still children to her and in need of rebuke!” She was tough and loved, and important in her small world.

One of my mother’s tales of her mother at the end included her “dying of a carbuncle and running naked down the street” until Granda Marshall had to have her “put away”. I never knew what a carbuncle was till I googled it and found that it is a type of boil. Painful but not enough to kill you I don’t think? But my mother reports she was driven crazy from the pain. Maybe she had dementia at the end? And a boil.

My Dad remembered Granny warmly. But she would have had to have loved him, having just returned from Canada in his snazzy Florsheim shoes looking handsome with his lovely smile. And he didn’t abandon Jenny in their hour of need. He stood by her when she became in a family way, even if he possibly did not know her all that



well.

Granny Marshall was known as Liz and Lizzie. She had a wonderful sense of humor. She was loved by many. She was a survivor. Thank you to Lizzie and to her mother Elizabeth Reid for surviving the trials of womanhood in the 19th century.



## GRANNY HOSBURGH and ALICE

Juniper Green, 1933-4

Who exactly was Granny Hosburgh? She is seen here with my cousin Alice, youngest daughter of my mother's oldest brother Uncle Willie, who fought in WW I and returned without a leg. My mother who was 5 years old when Willie arrived home, would tell her friends at the time that she would be at the train meeting her brother who "was coming home and could walk with only one leg", Jenny would tell how she amused herself poking her finger in the hole on the knee of his wooden leg. There were many gruesome battles in early 1915 including the second battle of Ypres.

The name Hosburgh (or Hosborough) does not appear on Granda Marshall's birth certificate in 1871. His mother is listed as Janet Marshall and John Murray as his father. They appear not to have been married, as Granda Marshall is labeled "illegitimate" ironically on his marriage certificate on August 3, 1894.

Janet Marshall married James Hosburgh in 1885 when her son James was 14. In 1888 she had a daughter named Mary Hosburgh. Auntie Mary Hosburgh (she was always referred to by both names by my mother) "never had a kind word to say about the Marshalls" according to several of my contemporary cousins, Pamela daughter of Willa and, "wee Alice" daughter of Alice, both granddaughters of Uncle Willie who grew up in Juniper Green.

Uncle Willie reportedly, "took wood up to Auntie Mary" and looked out for her in her spinsterhood despite her reported disdain for the Marshalls.

In the 1871 census a Margaret and Elizabeth Horsborough are listed at 49 and 50 Swanston. Elizabeth age 52 is the "proprietress" and Margaret 56 "washerwoman". In the same census at a different abode is a John Farquar age 47, a "laborer", who lives with his wife Elizabeth and a 6 year old son John. This John Farquar would seem to be too old to have been involved with Granny Marshall's poor mother. At another address in Colinton nearby, there is a James Hosburgh age 16 listed as a "servant". Granny's mother would have been 14 at this census. Granda's name was James. I wondered if this 16 year old James Horsborough could be Lizzie's father and not John Farquar? But later seeing John Farquar's name on both Elizabeth Reid's death certificate and Granny Lizzie's birth certificate it seems he is the father.

So the mystery of how all of these people are related to Granny Horsborough is confusing. At first I wondered if she was related to either Granny or Granda Marshall at all? Perhaps she was a friend or village foster parent? But she was in my mother's life while she lived in Juniper Green. And she was evidently the only mother either Granny or Granda Marshall had.

This portrait comes from a tiny 2x3 inch black and white snapshot. Granny Hosborough's actual face is about 1/4 inch and blurred, so the likeness is subject to much "artistic license". She looks austere in her long black Victorian dress and stiff collar and cumberbund. She and her daughter who remained unmarried, were the owner's of the home they lived in on Ivy Terrace in Juniper Green. There is another family portrait outside that house perhaps on the day Willie came home from the war? My mother looks about 5 in the photo so that would fit the timeline. It is a sturdy little stone house with tile roof and curtains on the windows.

Maybe this portrait is not the warmest, most maternal face? But cameras were probably still intimidating to someone born in the mid 19th century. I will grant her that, and thank her for caring for my Grandfather and Grandmother when she may have been the only one willing to step up to the plate.

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GRANNY HORSBOROUGH  
+ ALICE

DAD and ME  
Nootka Street, Vancouver 1948

Here is my baby picture with my Dad standing on the steps of a still to be completed 3853 Nootka Street. I am glad I got his impressive, strong blacksmith hand in there. Dad does not have on his blacksmith clothes for this photo. He wears his white ironed shirt, tie, fedora and warm wool coat.

My Dad loved babies and would tell of being called into duty as a young boy to walk and sshh one of the many younger siblings or babies of older siblings to sleep. I hope he was happy to see me amidst all the excitement at home. I would love to read a letter he might have written home announcing the news. I can hear some of the sisters wondering how on earth they were going to manage? And maybe clucking in disapproval? Family gossiping and grumping was something my father suggested might have made the precipitous seeming move to Canada more understandable, although he was very fond of his sisters and the husbands they brought to the family.

The house was an ongoing project. My Dad bought "the lot" from a coworker at B.C. Marine who had already laid a foundation wall and "had the plans". "It was up the street from the Renfrew Park" and "had a bright outlook" on the spring or late winter morning when he first laid eyes on it. He had never built anything before. He did say that he had always been interested in taking a carpentry apprentice mostly because it was "not dirty like blacksmithing". But in the end he entered the "family trade". And eventually he had a chance to practice his carpentry skills, and was eager for the adventure it would seem.

He may not have built the house literally by himself, because there is a picture of him (with his head cut off sadly) standing in the middle of the still open house, among a small crew he seems to have hired to help him put up the roof. He reportedly fell off the roof during this process, but happily was none the worse for wear. Or at least it would be hard to know since his body took a lot of abuse everyday down at BC Marine anyway.

Tom took the advice of a Malcolm Smith a fellow blacksmith, whose name lived on in infamy in tales of installing and constantly repairing "the boiler" which was to provide the central heating. This was an actual boiler off a fishing boat from someone Malcolm knew who worked up the coast. It was not the standard furnace, familiar to anyone who played in a basement rec room in East Vancouver in the 50's. Malcolm Smith recommended this as an economical way of heating the large three bedroom abode. It may be that initially Tom thought he could manage with the living room fireplace, but he quickly learned that the fireplace was not up to the task of heating the rambling house he had erected.

Many memories of growing up in that house include cozy times hugging a big metal radiator while watching t.v. when the boiler was working, or listening to my Dad banging at it in the utility room off the kitchen or on the pipes beneath the house when it was not. I never heard him utter a curse word ever, but he had every reason to over the years trying to get 3853 up to snuff.

Later the house would be "raised", as in lifted up to put a basement under it, not leveled to the ground. Many houses in the neighborhood had this operation performed also, as they had been all been built as single story bungalows which were thought not to need a dug out basement in the mild coastal climate of lower mainland BC. But the dampness and utility won out as families grew. Our house did not have it's basement dug out before the rest of the house was lowered over it. Rather it was lifted up and a lower floor built around it, which meant that the windows were bright and above ground. From my point of view though, as an overly self-conscious 12 year old who wanted everything to be like everyone's else's, our house never looked right. It was a giant box with overly big cement steps up to the main floor where we lived. My father eventually moved the "boiler" downstairs and eventually put in a "real furnace" and "finished it" to the point of having several more bedrooms down "in the basement". It would accommodate a lot of people, and did after my father sold it within a few days as my mother's health was failing and they moved to a seniors apartment in Burnaby. It was

a traumatic move with many things pitched in the garbage rather than decisions made as to what might have emotional importance in the future.

I always felt very ambivalent about the house. As did my Dad. However it is still standing in East Vancouver, which given the fortunes of many of the houses in that part of the city, is something of a real estate miracle. Tom lived





## JENNY and HEATH

Brooklyn, 1974

My mother came to stay with Rick and I at our apartment on the third floor of 485-14th Street in Brooklyn, to take care of us and show us the ropes of baby management. I remember being anxious that she would come too early and then we would all be sick of each other by the time the baby arrived. She stayed up in Toronto where Evelyn and family were living at the time and we “held her off” till the time was right. She got on the train and Rick picked her up. I think she was in the back seat of the red Chevy Vega station wagon as we were led out of Brooklyn Hospital and delivered of Heath into my arms in the front seat. No car seat and maybe not even the seatbelt on. Just the warm pronouncements of the nurse who beamed “This baby is in for a good time!”

Jenny was, so so helpful. She made us sandwiches after running up to Prospect Park West in Windsor Terrace each morning to do her “messages” each morning. On one of those mornings she came upon a movie set. Al Pacino was filming one of his first big movies “Dog Day Afternoon”. She had never seen a movie being made and I am sure that despite her hoping, but not called to be in a crowd scene, it was a highlight of her visit. She always relished adding this tidbit to the story when the topic came up.

Jenny grocery shopped, cooked for us, did laundry, and taught us how to swaddle the baby Heath when he was “girnin” in the evening. She swaddled him in the shawl she made for us, displayed here in all its splendor.

To the right is our plant we called “Onya, Begonia”. We got it at a yard sale in upstate NY and it lived for many years until something happened to it. When Heath was 10 days old we piled into the red Chevy Vega and drove up the Taconic where his umbilical chord nob fell off in a ladies room. This same Chevy Vega would transport the three of us and our cat Alice out to Los Angeles a year later when we tried moving to the west coast to be nearer to the LA family and mine further up the coast.

We visited Clari and George in Chatham, and dropped Jenny at the train in Albany to continue back to Toronto and then home to Vancouver.

I am so grateful that I did not let my youthful independence and anxiety about being a new mother overrule having my mother come to help us. It was such an important few weeks in our life together. And I cannot imagine how she would have felt if we had not included her. I know I would have been devastated if I could not have performed a similar role in my grandchildren's early days in the world. Thank you Jenny for making sure you were there and for teaching me how to cope in the early days of learning to be a mother and for setting me straight about how to be a doting grandma.



MUM + HEATH

## GRANDPA TOM and HEATH

Los Angeles 1974

This is a portrait of my Dad with Heath when Jenny and Tom joined us in Los Angeles at Christmas, 1974 to visit the California family. This included Gaga and Amy who lived on Huntley Drive then, before they moved back to NY a couple of years later after we gave up LA for Brooklyn in 1977 after eighteen months there.

Here is another attempt to represent my father's massive hands, holding a baby, not a blacksmith's hammer. I saved a poem I found that describes my feelings about Dad's hands:

Unforeseen

By Reid Bush

Before we buried him, no one thought  
to trace around his hand.

It would have been an easy thing to do  
if you could stand his fingers cold, stiff:  
just a piece of paper underneath  
and pen or pencil

I don't think there's anybody  
could half imagine in a million years  
how much since he died we've argued  
over just how big his hands were.

It's hard to know when you need to  
what it is you are going to want.

I remember the trip to LA with mixed feelings. My parents put up in a hotel /motel that Clari and George stayed in when they would come to LA in the winter from NY. It was in Hollywood somewhere above the boulevard and not fancy but better than The Moore Hotel, a mildly seedy place we stayed for occasional weekend shopping trips to Seattle.

The hotel was away from everyone, and they didn't drive in L.A. so they were dropped off in the evening after supper, and probably felt like they were missing something.

They were not used to staying in hotels, so I know they felt isolated and probably a little shunted aside. They were used to everyone piling in and making do together whether it was comfortable or not. The family back home in Scotland, would regale them in blue aerogramme letters of the latest visitors from Canada, like Auntie



Kate and Uncle Willie who would come for the summer and rotate among all the sisters tight little flats or bungalows around Edinburgh. Overstaying their welcomes it was implied. But that did not mean that anyone would ever suggest that they stay anywhere else when they visited. The disrespect was beyond imagining.

Customs and times change, and I hope we made it up to them later when they came to stay with us in our own house on Rainbow Ave in Mt. Washington, after moving to LA . And finally on 12th St in Brooklyn when we ultimately moved back in 1977 expecting Matthew's arrival.

I know they always felt more appropriately included being in our house, but it didn't stop my Dad by the third day after arriving in Brooklyn on his first visit after Jenny died in 1979, from anxiously pacing until finally calling up to find out the Greyhound bus schedule to plan his return ride home to Vancouver.

He made his decision to climb back on the Greyhound bus to go home, having barely settled in to his visit. You don't see Greyhounds much anymore, but whenever I see the logo on the side of one, I think of my Dad.

Grandpa Tom as he came to be known, loved holding and singing to babies. This was a favorite:

You can come and see the babv anv dav vou care to call.



## GRANDA WATT with AUNTIES MADGIE and MAGGIE

Edinburgh, 1914

Granda Watt preached the virtues of the top flat, with the light and views above the rooftops, and presumably none of the noise of a family as big as his living above him. The front flat at 1 Barony Place where the family, including my 2 year old father moved in 1905 from 96 Potter Row (now the location of Edinburgh University's Student Union building) fit the bill. The climb to reach the top flat several times a day was worth it to Granda until he eventually had to revise this view in later years as age and hard labor caught up with Granny who could no longer climb the stairs. He never sold the Barony Place flat though, but acquired two others; one on Gayfield Square and another on Cochran Terrace not far from Barony Place, where he eventually lived with Granny and the younger children. Later one or another of the family took them over until they each eventually left the old neighborhood.

Granda Watt had the reputation of heading up Broughton Street hill every day to Princes Street, where he walked the full length and back home again. Various members of the family would run into him making their own rounds in the neighborhood, and eventually noticed him slowing down, until one evening he took to his bed. He invited each individual at the house that night to his bedside to say goodnight. He died in his sleep on October 14, 1945 in his bed at 2 Cochran Terrace. He was 75 years old.

I was fortunate to meet Auntie Maggie and Uncle John Tod when they visited Toronto when I was 13. We took the greyhound bus across Canada. It took four days and nights sitting up. I remember sleeping much of the way to my father's disdain that I "was missing everything". It was a series of naps and stops for grilled cheese sandwiches and coke or tea depending on the time of day. Later I met Auntie Madgie when I finally got to Edinburgh with Dad in November 1979, a few months after my mother died in Vancouver the last day of August, 1979. He decided that we should go to Edinburgh together to meet the remaining members before "it was too late". I am glad we made the trip together and he was able to introduce me so I could see him in his element with his sisters and brother Jim, who obviously loved him and missed his daily presence in their lives over the years. As he missed theirs.

Here Auntie Maggie is a bright eyed two year old and Madgie is about 9 or 10 since this portrait comes from the family photo made for Uncle Willie's wedding around 1914. Granda Watt sports the heavy mustache he had his whole adult life. He reportedly would joke that he could get the remains of a previous meal out of the mustache when he felt hungry!

Granda Watt or Watty as the family called him, played a melodia (a type of accordian?) at the family singalongs where according to Grandpa Tom everyone had their own song to sing. Tom's was "Ragtime Cowboy Joe" which he would be glad to perform in the kitchen on Nootka Street for me, as he made our evening nite cap of toast and tea. He might have even done a little soft shoe as he snapped his giant thumbs and forefingers together. Big smile on his face.



GRANDA MARSHALL  
with GEORGE and 'wee'ALICE'

Here Granda Marshall is sitting in the hills, probably near his home in Juniper Green. On his lap are his great grandchildren the children of Alice who appeared earlier sitting on Granny Hosburgh's knee.

Granda Marshall worked his whole life as a "paper maker" in a plant near Juniper Green that employed many in the area. I don't have a lot of stories about Granda Marshall but he seems like a sweet man who was active in his community and church even if he might have had to play second fiddle to Granny Marshall who seems like a bit of a Queen Bee or at least a social butterfly. Not unlike Jenny and Tom's relationship and their lives around Nootka Street.

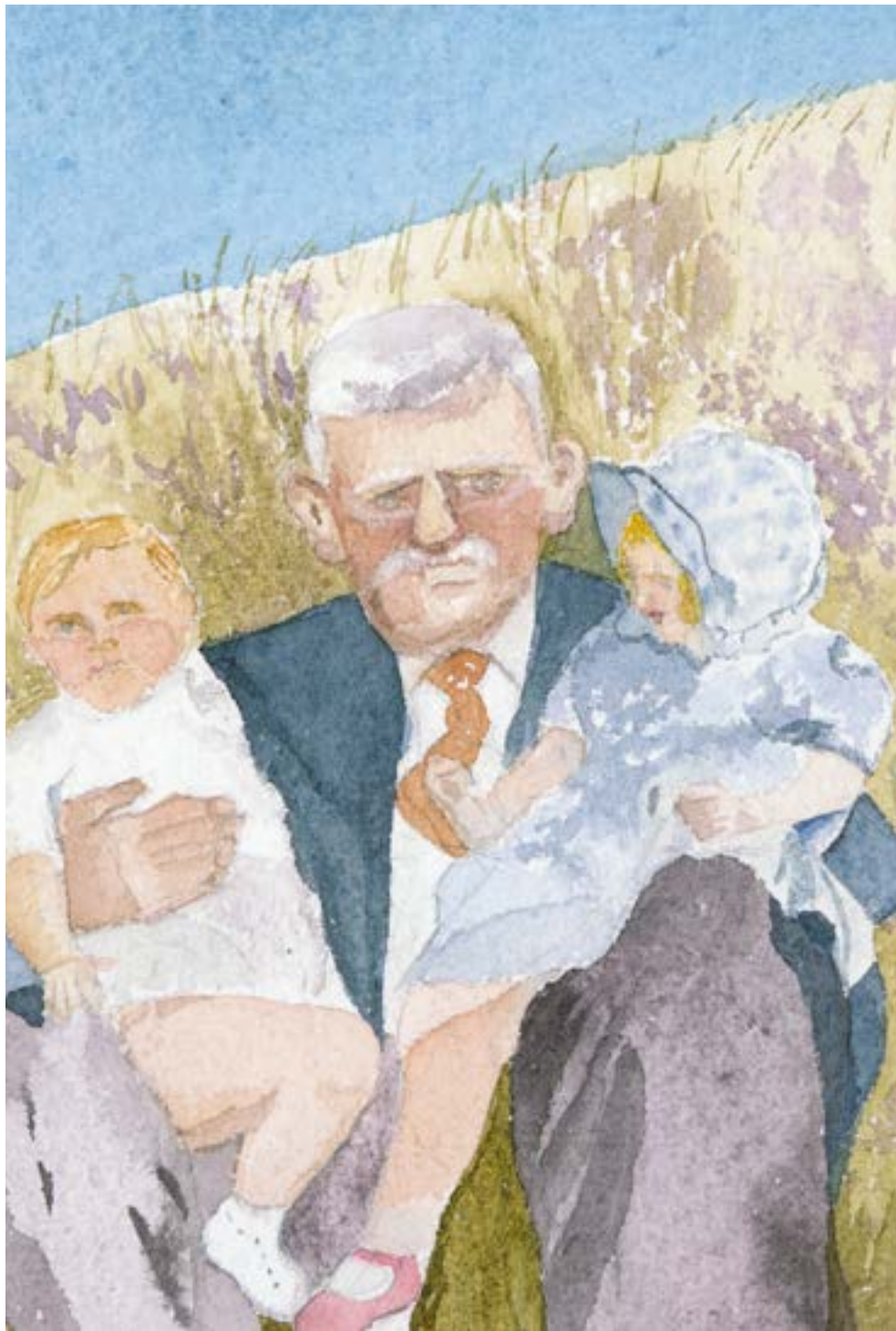
The main story of Granda Marshall was the one of him hanging on to the door of the bus as it pulled away from St. Andrew's bus terminal with Jenny and the children on board, in 1947. In my mind it seems like it would have been a dreary, grey day in Edinburgh. But maybe it was clear and sunny. As it was, he never saw any of them again. My mother always took the children frequently to be with her parents in Juniper Green, even tho she fit in with the large gang of sisters and sisters-in-laws in her neighborhood just below Colton Hill in Edinburgh.

As she made her plans to sell up the top flat they occupied on Brunswick Street Jenny spent even more time with Granda Marshall, eventually living with him after the flat sold, just before she left. So it must have been a terrible wrench to have her leave.

Granda Marshall died February 6, 1952, "the same day as George VI, the Queen's father" my mother would acknowledge at each anniversary.

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## SONIA, baby PA GEORGE and ALEXANDER

New York 1898

Now a portrait from the Brown-Robinson side of the family.

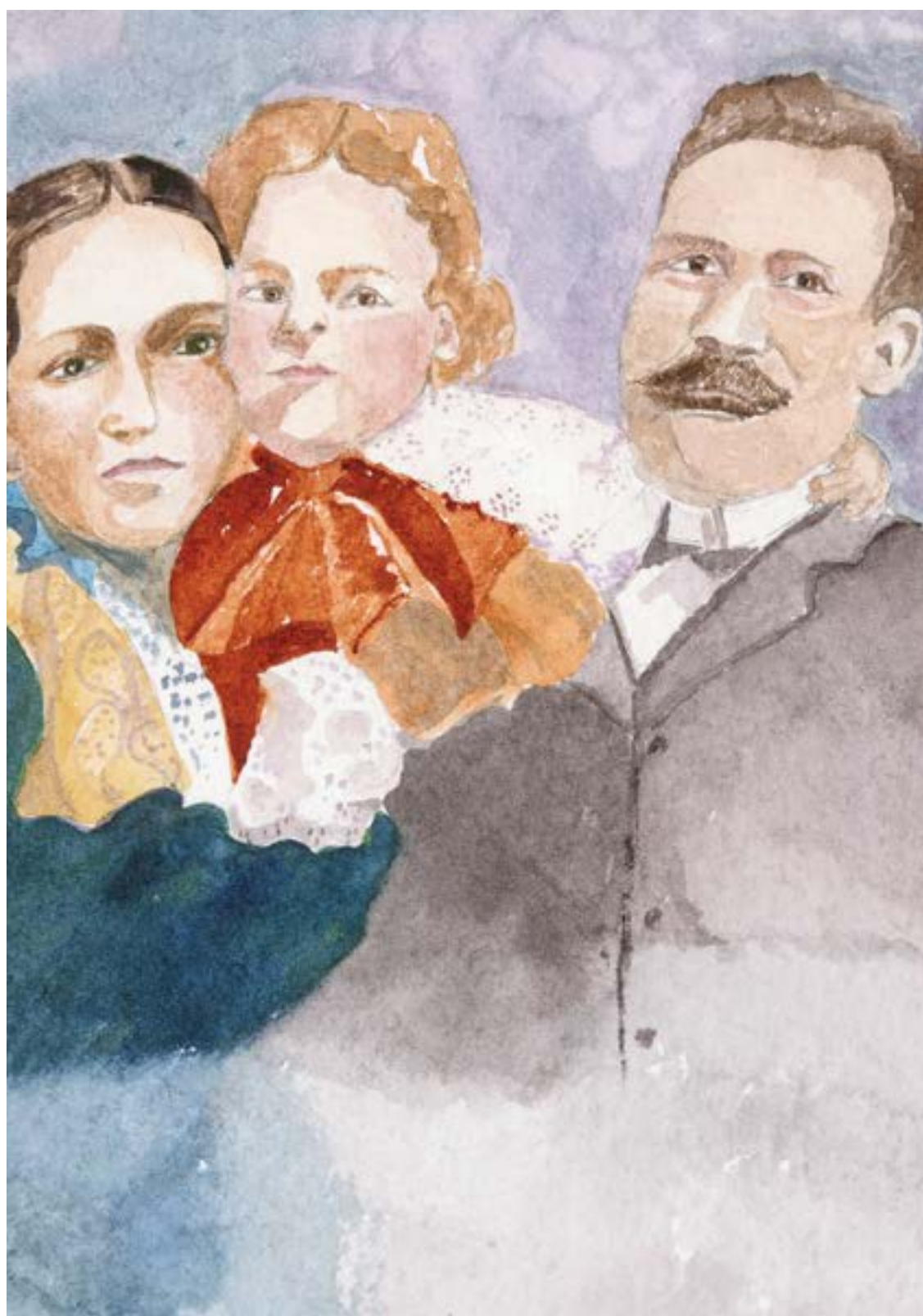
It is hard to leave out this portrait of Rick's grandfather George Robinson as a small boy between his beautiful mother Sonia and handsome father Alexander. They are all impressively dressed, especially Pa George with his flouncy bowed tie and laced collar.

Alexander Robinson according to family lore, was a "courier for Lenin" and had to leave Russia on a forged British passport in the late 1800's. Hence the Scottish surname Robinson. His family name was actually Club (spelling uncertain). Although something of a revolutionary when he arrived on the lower east side of New York he soon set up his own drugstore on "Orchard corner Stanton". The drugstore had one of the first telephones and people would come in to get messages or make calls.

George told of running wild in the streets of the Lower East Side, negotiating between the Irish and Jewish gangs that fought in the neighborhood, although it does not seem that he was actually a member of a "Gang of NY". He enjoyed telling the story that Jacob Javits who eventually became a Republican Senator from NY state, was a "snotty nosed kid" who lived across the street.

Amy described Sonia as always being beautifully dressed. Maybe she was a seamstress? We have another snapshot of her later in her life, in Far Rockaway outside a holiday cottage, standing next to Rick, who sits on his tricycle nearby. She wears a matronly outfit complete with hat and gloves despite the heat of the summer, looking like the elegant great grandmother. There is not much in the way of stories from this side of the family that I have gathered. But it is impressive to realize that Finn is actually a fifth generation native born New Yorker thanks to Sonia and Alexander's landing up as part of the massive European migration to the city from the Pale of Settlement around the Polish/Russian borders in the 1800's.

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AMY and RICK  
New York 1946

This is not a great likeness of Amy which is ironic because I knew Amy better than most of the other faces already shared. I enjoyed painting it despite my difficulty successfully “getting” Amy.

This portrait is from a snapshot probably taken very soon after Rick was born in NY Cornell Hospital on 1st Avenue in Manhattan. He looks a little like a drowned foundling, and the dark exposure of the photo does not help.

Dave and Amy lived at the time, in the heart of the West Village on the northwest corner of West 10th and 4th Streets, above a store near where Small’s Jazz Club is presently located.

Rick tells that on the hot unairconditioned nights of a New York summer he, diaper clad in his stroller would be pushed a few blocks down to Washington Square Park to enjoy the cool evening breezes and maybe play in the playground or listen to beatniks making poetry?

Clari and George had both lived in the village as young marrieds but later moved up to Washington Heights on Haven Avenue where they were neighbors of Leah and Jack Brown. There is a classic photo of Amy and Betty (Aunt Betty, Gaga’s sister) standing next to Dave looking up at him lovingly.

The Browns, David Arthur’s parents, moved many times after Haven Avenue including Philadelphia, Atlantic City and East Orange New Jersey. Eventually, Dave and Amy fortuitously met again as adults, when Dave was at NYU and Amy was home from the University of Wisconsin. The story goes that the Grandmas Clari and Leah ran into each other and said “the kids are in town” and romance blossomed.

The Browns including Sue, Rick and Liz moved briefly up to Elmsford NY, until the New York Thruway was built through their housing development and their house was bought by the state. I think there was no love lost on Amy’s part, who admitted she was eager to leave and try life in Los Angeles where Clari and George had moved. The girls flew out to California with Amy, while Dave, later to be famously renamed “Gaga” by his own grandchildren, and Rick drove out to L.A. Rick was five, and crossing Death Valley his father would cover him in wet towels to keep him cool. He remembers wearing a souvenir Indian feathered headdress and some “real Indians” complimenting him as they filled up with gas.

The Browns joined Clari and George who had settled in a sweet little bungalow on Holly Drive in Hollywood. Eventually they moved to Studio City on Ben Avenue, not realizing they were over the hill in “The Valley”, and no longer in Hollywood.

After 25 years in LA , Dave and Amy moved back to the Upper West Side less than a year after Rick and Heath and I moved back in 1977, just before Matthew was born. They lived out most of their “golden years” on the Upper West Side on West 71st Street where Amy bought and sold antique jewelry and Dave was a political activist in the Grey Panthers and a welder/sculptor with a studio in Park Slope near us on 12th Street. After Dave died we moved Amy to Brooklyn to live her last few years alone in her own apartment in our building at 110 Ocean Parkway. Eventually Heath bought the apartment when Amy died and soon Kate and then Finn joined him in apartment 2B







## THE WATT-BROWNS

Brooklyn February 1978

Here we are standing near our house at 510 12th Street in Park Slope with Heath 3 years and Matthew about 8 months old, after a big February snow storm. Actually we are standing on 14th Street near Sheri and Mark's house down from where we lived at 485 when Heath was born in 1974. We were introduced to the Saltzberg-Grashows when Amy and Dave were visiting us at 14th Street for the first time and rang their bell by mistake. Amy and Sheri got into a conversation about new motherhood and Sheri and I met up shortly afterward to begin our long friendship of walking the kids to 11th St playground and meeting for coffee at Connecticut Muffin, almost 50 years later with Rory.

These were good years with lots of ballgames in Prospect Park, basketball at St. Saviour's gym on 8th Avenue, school at the Park Slope Daycare Collective, PS 107 and later Woodward Park. We moved across the park to Prospect Park South and our big red house at 100 Marlborough Road in 1983. The boys would walk down from Woodward Park stopping at 3rd Street playground with a little gang of friends from school and then home, feeling pretty independent and grown up. Later they would take the bus from Bartel-Pritchard down Coney Island Avenue to Marlborough Road.

The peripatetic Watt-Browns would move many more times, perhaps reliving some of the wanderlust of Tom

Watt and the Robinson-Brown families. Brooklyn was our longest stay, the place where both our sons and two of our grandchildren were born. in August of 2021 we moved back to South Orange NJ to be near Heath, Kate and Finn. Regular visits across the Atlantic to be near Matthew, Bethany, Charlotte, Elise and Arlo in Winchester, have kept us all together.

We have been a fortunate family.

