

January, 2018

2018

# *British Home Child Group International*

Design and Layout by Karen Mahoney

## Home Children and the Catholic Church by Sandra Joyce

As we celebrate Christmas and the New Year, and the emotions they raise in all of us, it is especially poignant to think about our British Home Children. This must have been a dismal time for them – thinking about their families and friends left behind in the UK even if they had the good fortune to be placed in a caring family.

One of the things not often talked about was the Catholic Church's involvement in the placing of the children in Canada. This was especially brought to our attention after meeting Gilles Duceppe, former leader of the Opposition and leader of the Bloc Quebecois.

Duceppe's maternal grandfather was Irish Catholic and emigrated to Canada by the Catholic church. After being sent to St George's Home in Ottawa, he was then transferred to Quebec, where he was placed with a Franco-phone family. He did not speak French and the family did not speak English. His only relief to the extreme isolation he experienced was to visit the nearby First Nation's reserve to speak his native language.



*British children of the Catholic faith were sent to New Orpington Lodge (later St George's Home) in Ottawa and were generally placed from there on farms in Quebec.*

At first, the child migrant scheme sending children to Canada, was largely driven by the Evangelical Protestant revival movement in the 1860s. Seeing the destitution of children and wanting to save them from a life of poverty and crime, it was common practice for children to be removed from their circumstances (and families) and institutionalized, instead of trying to reform societal issues responsible for their plight.

The Catholic Church found it necessary to create a parallel system to the Protestants' as they felt that too many Catholic children were being converted. They were losing their flock.

It is reported that one-fifth of Dr. Barnardo's children at that time were Catholic. Dr. Barnardo was openly hostile to the teachings of the Catholic Church and it is said that he made no efforts to place these children with Catholic families.

In 1880, a Catholic Children's Protection Society was founded in Liverpool and 13 Ragged Schools were opened by 1887. In 1884, the Bishop of Salford (Manchester), Dr. Herbert Vaughan, appointed a Board of Enquiry which was concerned with poor children's fate as Catholics. The Board reported that nearly 10,000 of them were in danger of losing their faith.

The Catholic Church then set out to develop ways to keep these children in their fold. One of the ways was to embrace the migration of children to Catholic families in Canada.

## Home Children and the Catholic Church continued

Father Nugent of Liverpool brought the first group of Catholic children to Canada as early as August 1870, while one of Cardinal Manning's secretaries, Father Thomas Seddon, became involved in the emigration of Catholic children in 1874. The Liverpool Catholic Children's Protection Society sent children out regularly from its hostel in Liverpool to the St. Vincent's Rescue Home in Montreal where they were placed in farm and domestic positions.

Catholic Children were also placed through the New Orpington Lodge in the western fringes of Ottawa (later known as St. George's Home). It was probably named after the Catholic orphanage at Orpington in Kent. Opening in October 1895, it was originally furnished and fitted up for the reception of fifty children through the generosity of a benefactor. During the first year of operation it was used for two parties of approximately thirty children each. It was purchased after the first year for 600 pounds, and was owned by the society and its successors until the 1940s.



In a report, however, G. Bogue Smart, the one and only person ever hired as the specially created Inspector of British Immigrant Children and Receiving Homes in 1900, was not happy with the state of affairs at the Lodge:

"The accommodation at this Home, I regret to say, is not what it should be. The boys' sleeping quarters consists of one large room in the attic. This room is unfurnished, unplastered, and access to it is only through a narrow attic stairway. There were some camp beds with mattresses and blankets sufficient to accommodate half a dozen boys, and the balance of the party are obliged to sleep on the floor on very ancient and worn looking mattresses, covered by a blanket and a quilt and a pillow, without a cover, for each. On a hot night this room must be insufferable. In case of fire or other emergency, it would be almost impossible to get the children out unless by jumping from the upper windows."

After this report, the Lodge was renovated, renamed and reopened in 1905 as the St. George's Home.

The Liverpool Catholic Children's Protection Society, established in 1880, was better organized. It sent children out regularly from its hostel in Liverpool, placing them through a receiving home in Montreal, the St. Vincent's Rescue Home, where an agent was responsible for the children. They depended greatly on the bonus of \$2.00 per child which the Canadian government paid to all the societies engaged in child emigration.

After the First World War, there was an even greater demand for children to be placed in Canada. St. George's surpassed their previous record of 400 per year and spent over twenty thousand dollars for further renovations. In 1920, the Canadian government replaced the previous \$2.00 per head payment with a grant of \$1,000 to organizations bringing out more than 100 children per year, with a \$500 bonus for each additional hundred or fraction, if over fifty.

The reception of child migrants in Canada mirrors how poor children were viewed at this time. They, it was believed, should be removed from their sordid surroundings and institutionalized. At the beginning of the twentieth century, however, these notions began to change. Children were starting to be placed with foster families.

The Ontario legislature, in 1893, passed an Act for the Prevention of Cruelty to and Better Protection of Children, which provided for the establishment of Children's Aid Societies. The spread of these societies showed greater government interest in child welfare. A professional body of social workers developed. However, their goals and methods were still in alignment to those of the British emigration societies - to turn dependent children into productive adults by training them in work and discipline from an early age whether their new rural surroundings were familiar or not. They were generally regarded as cheap labour and they were still stigmatized by the communities meant to care for them.

Right up to the Great Depression, children were being sent to Canada by the Catholic Church who thought it was imperative to place them with Catholic families. Although efforts were made to place children in Ontario with mainly Irish and Francophone Catholic families, many, like Duceppe's grandfather, were sent to Quebec where no English was spoken at all.

## The Parisian by Sandra Joyce

Built in 1880 in Glasgow by Robert Napier & Sons for the Allan Line, Liverpool, England, the Parisian was launched in November of that year. At that point in time, it was recognized as one of the largest ships and the first to have bilge keels. A bilge keel is used to reduce a ship's tendency to roll. Bilge keels are employed in pairs.

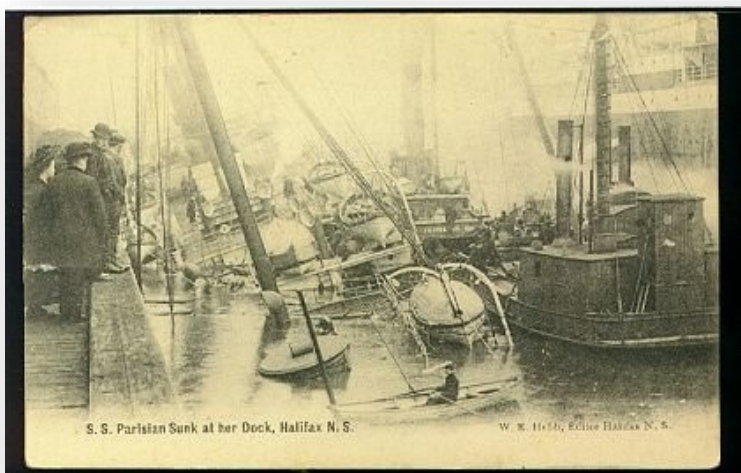
She was also the first North Atlantic Mail Steamer to be built of steel. There was accommodation for 150 first, 100 second, and 1000 passengers on steerage.

Her maiden voyage took place in 1881 and she was one of the busiest ships crossing the Atlantic. Her voyages departed from Liverpool and were completed in 9-12 days, depending on the weather. One year, she made it in a record of eight days. She usually made seven or eight trips a year starting in March and ending in late October.

In 1899, the Parisian was rebuilt, with new triple-expansion engines installed by Workman Clark & Co in Belfast. In 1902, she was fitted with a Marconi wireless. In March of 1903, it is noted that 2,000 emigrants bound for Canada were on board. In total, over the years more than 2,000 British Home Children traveled to Canada on her decks.

In 1905, the Parisian was involved in a collision during the day. There were 900 people on board at the Halifax harbour entrance and she was at a standstill waiting for pilot Flemming to bring the ship into Halifax harbour. The Captain of the Parisian saw the Hamburg-America Steamer Albano approaching the Parisian yet he was confident that the Albano would clear them. The Albano's signalled that it was were going astern but the ship did not reverse. Thinking fast, the experienced Parisian's Captain Johnston immediately ordered full steam ahead to prevent a collision to the engine room. The Albano rammed the Parisian in the after-compartments of Number Four hold causing a man-sized hole.

A rumour began circulating in Halifax that the Parisian had been sunk and the harbour became crowded as people rushed to have a look. It is estimated that 10,000 people were standing there at the harbour and were in boats, watching the spectacle.



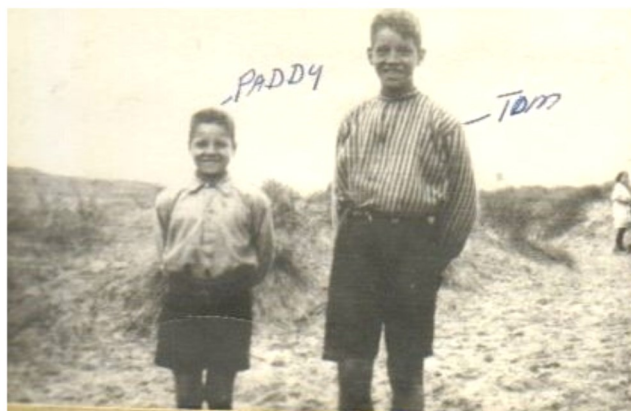
Most of the steerage baggage was salvaged and all the first class luggage was saved. The Parisian was towed to Pier 2 and after settling on the bottom, was repaired and refloated.

After the incident, the Parisian's route changed to the Glasgow – Halifax – Boston route. The only other notable incident that happened to the Parisian was when she searched for victims of the wreck of The Titanic in 1912. Unfortunately, the Parisian reported that she was unable to find any survivors.

In 1914, the Parisian was sold to ship breakers in Italy.



## Thomas Francis Power by Ellen Joan Knighton



Let me now introduce you to my Father, Thomas Francis Power, born in Clonmel, Tipperary, Ireland, a former resident of Wolfe Island, Ontario. 1976-1990. He was buried there at the Sacred Heart Cemetery. Dad was born February 18, 1915 in Clonmel, Tipperary, Ireland. He died April 21, 1993 in Kingston, Ontario.

In the 1911 Census of Ireland, in the town of Clonmel, Tipperary, listed at 33 Albert St., is the little Catholic family of Thomas Power Sr., age 38, his wife Mary Kinsella

Power, age 30, children Edward (Ned) age 5, James age 3 and Margaret a baby. Into this family came John, born in 1912, Mary, born in 1913 and Thomas Francis, born 1915.

At the time, Ireland was waging an independence fight with Great Britain. Strife was widespread. Thomas Power Sr., after going to England and making a plan, took his wife and six children across the Irish Sea in 1917. Dad was two and a half years old. The journey was apparently on a pigboat. They settled in Widnes, Cheshire, England (the Liverpool area). Four more babies would be born into this family: Patrick (Paddy) and Ellen (stillborn) twins 1918, Kathleen (Kitty) 1919 and Charles (stillborn) 1920.

Dad's family was big now and struggling. His parents worked when they could. We have a picture of our grandmother working in a munitions factory during WW1. Sadness befell them when Ned, age 13, died in a work related illness in 1919. Following and around the time of the birth of Charles, our grandmother is listed as living in the Prescott Union Workhouse, Merseyside and died there 1920. Dad had lost his mother, he was 5 years old.

Our grandfather, Thomas, now a widower, made the following arrangements for his children: James, on his own at age 12, John, Thomas and Paddy went to the boys' orphanage, Nazareth House, Ditton, Widnes, Cheshire, Margaret and Mary went to the girls' orphanage, Nazareth House, Crosby, Merseyside and little Kitty was sent to Ireland to be cared for by her grandmother (Ellen Power Sr.) and her aunts. Sadly Kitty died at age 11 years in 1930, possibly of diphtheria.

In years to come Paddy would stay in England and become a British soldier. He was killed in action in 1940 on the North African front in WW II and is buried in Egypt.

The other four surviving children of the Power family became British Home Children.

## Thomas Francis Power *continued*

Life in the catholic orphanage, run by The Sisters of Nazareth, for Tom and his brothers John and Paddy, would not be easy. Dad told us a few stories. The lads would go with horse and wagon to collect donated food...so hunger was an issue. Discipline was strict and punishment could mean long hours on your knees, supposedly in prayer.

There was great excitement upon the formation of a brass band. The boys had colourful uniforms and became known all over the diocese. The Power lads were part of this. Dad played the euphonium, a tuba like instrument and a bass and a cello apparently. The band played for a 60th birthday celebration for King George V, when he visited the area. A claim to fame! They also played, occasionally, at the girls' orphanage and the boys could see their sisters.

Family love and care was scant. Dad told us that one day one of the nuns said that she had been to the girls' orphanage and saw his sisters and that they send their love. Dad waited all day for that nun to reach into her deep pocket and give "it" to him. Another heartbreak!

I do think that all of the children would have had some visits from their father too, but sadly he also died. Dad was 12 years old. John was already in Canada when Margaret and Mary would have attended their father's funeral in July of 1928. Likely Jim, Tom and Paddy did as well. Now the children were truly orphans. In just a few weeks the sisters left for Canada.

The picture of Dad and our Uncle Paddy is the only one we have showing us Tom, the lad. After 10 years in the orphanage, a visitor came into his classroom. The gentleman

was the agent for The Catholic Children's Emigration Association. He asked "Who wants to go to Canada?" Dad was first to put his hand up. A new chapter in his life was about to begin.

On August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1930 Tom boarded The Duchess of Atholl, with a group and sailed the Atlantic to Canada. The journey was comfortable and fun, arriving in Quebec City on August 28<sup>th</sup>, 1930. The lads would then have travelled by train to Ottawa, to St. George's Home, a residence run by The Sisters of Charity. This was the distributing home for most catholic child immigrants. At least 8,228 children passed through there, most sent to French speaking farms in Quebec. It was thought that the children would have a better chance to retain their faith living in Quebec.

It is interesting to note that the documents were sometimes partially handwritten and that mistakes were made too. Technology was absent. In one Dad's birth date is incorrect. Also, he was listed to leave two days prior on The Duchess of Richmond. For years we thought that was his ship. It is also interesting to note that Dad was never a British subject. He maintained his love of his birth country, Ireland, all of his life. He considered himself an Irishman.

## Thomas Francis Power *continued*

He boarded a train to St Anne's Station to the farm of George Daoust in Ile Perrot, Vaudreuil, Quebec to begin a difficult and painful number of years as a B H C. An Irish lad, who had resided in England, was now a landed immigrant in Canada. Equipped with little knowledge of farm labour and not a word of French let alone any experience to face harsh Canadian winters, Tom began a new life.

At the outset the conditions were miserable. I believe he had to sleep in the barn. Tom was not allowed to speak English! In fact, he was punished for reading a magazine in English. My brother Jim relates to us, that Dad was whipped with the

horses' traces (harness). Subsequent to that, while working in the fields, on a hot day with a group of neighbours, Dad was encouraged to remove his shirt like the rest. He, at first, refused as he was embarrassed about the wounds on his back. Eventually he did so. The neighbours then witnessed Dad's pain. They took him home with them and called the parish priest. Dad was removed from that farm. He had been there close to one year. An endurance we cannot imagine.

The distribution home sent him off again to other farms. Dad remained a British Home Child until he was 20 years old, 1935, as was the term of his indenture. His last placement was near Gananoque, Ontario with a kind family. The Deryaws spoke English, an advantage immediately. The work for Tom was hard but the loneliness in those years was worse. During this time he became very ill with diphtheria, but recovered. One winter he worked in Northern Ontario at a lumber camp, possibly with his brother, John. For the next few years his life remained much the same, although, now working on various farms in the neighbourhood as a hired hand, 1933-1937. Dad was never a B H C on Wolfe Island.

Tom became lifelong friends with the Murphy family, on whose farm he lived and worked. The son and daughter became my godparents. Also living nearby were the Nuttalls, leading Dad to meet his wife to be! Mum's sister was Pansy Nuttall, from Beebrook Farms!

In 1937 Tom moved to Gananoque to work at a cheese factory, Cow and Gate Ltd. During WW II the milk was made into powdered milk for the troops.

Ellen Anne Fawcett was a slim, tall gal born and raised in Gananoque. Her father, Erwin Fawcett had moved to the town from Wolfe Island when he married Eugenia (Jean) Sly. Jean's ancestry went back three generations in Canada, the Sly family. John Sly had brought his family to Canada from the United States as United Empire Loyalists in the 1790s.

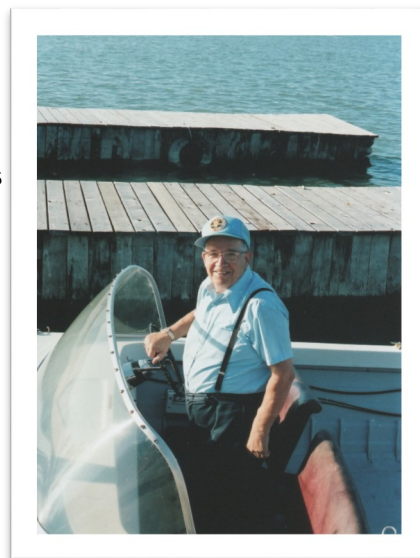


Power family Gananoque 1952

## Thomas Francis Power continued

Erwin's ancestors were from Wolfe Island, including Thomas, his father and Alexander, his grandfather and their families. Alexander immigrated to Canada from Northern Ireland about 1842 as did his wife Elizabeth Livingston and her parents. (The Fawcett School and Livingston Point) Many Fawcett descendants continue to live on Wolfe Island, cousins of the Power family. The Fawcett archives are well documented. Dad's life was about to change again. This time for the remainder of his life!

Tom and Ellen were married on August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1938. Together, through the war years, living in Gananoque, they began a big family. Lois was born in January 1940, Kathryn in December 1941, Pat, a preemie little girl, in October 1943 and Jim in November 1944. All of this time Dad continued to work at Cow and Gate, a very good thing for his growing family, because every day he brought home milk. With rationing during WW II, it was not easy to get any extra food.



Thomas F. Power

Dad was part of the Home Guard, a role he enjoyed. We all love this picture of him. Following the war, baby Joan was born in 1946, a baby boomer.

In 1944 Tom went to work at Links, a boat building company. He honed some carpentry skills there. In spare time he made wooden suitcases, a doll's bed and my baby rocking chair. A few of these remain in use! Following this, about 1950, Dad continued his work life as a painter and decorator. He became an expert hanging wallpaper and painting.

He worked painting the wartime houses in Barriefield, Kingston, as well as many jobs in Gananoque. He did a lot of that on weekends to supplement his income to care for a family of seven. The oldest child, Lois, remembers helping Dad and learning the trade too! He could be seen pushing his huge cart, loaded with gear all over town.

Mum managed the household and also took in work. With all those children the services of the family doctor were often required. Dad painted the doctor's office, home and also his cottage to pay the account.

Tom continued in this field, usually out of town, in Toronto, Brockville and Ottawa for example. Many of his projects were painting in hospitals. Another claim to fame is that Dad painted the inside of the dome of St George's Cathedral, Kingston!

In the mid fifties, Ellen was ready for a change and exclaimed, "If these five kids are going to get an education, then I need a career to finance it!" In the summer of 1955 Mum attended Teachers' College in Toronto. She began her professional life that September, teaching at Burgess #2, in the country!! The Power family was now on the move. Three of us were pupils in her one room school and Mum taught all 8 grades. Interestingly her mother and grandmother were both teachers and had taught at the Fawcett School on Wolfe Island, meeting their husbands.

## Thomas Francis Power *continued*



Power family 2014

We moved to Lombardy and then to R R #2 Portland, on the Houghton Bay Road to a home we called Hoot'n Hollar!! As the years went on, Jim was working along with Dad on school holidays and the weekends. He learned the trade too. Dad pruned the orchard and had us selling apples in Smiths Falls. We kids joined the 4H Gardening group and Dad planted a huge garden. It was full of vegetables we had never even heard of. In fact, we hated every minute of it!!!

Dad's company got the contract to paint the new tri service hospital in Ottawa in 1960 and he was the foreman. Following this, he was hired to be The Supervisor of the Painting and Glass Maintenance department for that National Defence Medical Centre. After much paperwork Dad received his official documents for his trade. He was to hold this

position until he retired in 1976. Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau signed his retirement scroll.

Due to Dad's permanent work, Ellen applied for a teaching position in Ottawa. The Power family was again on the move. It was 1962 and just Jim and I remained in high school. We now were city dwellers. Another chapter in Tom's life began.

Tom and Ellen were now in-laws and soon to be grandparents. The family expanded very quickly.

Mum got her wish the girls were nurses or teachers and Jim got his College degree as an Electrician, and became a manager in a large plant. Our parents' proudest day was the graduation day of Lois as an R.N. She won the gold medal. All five of us were married between 1961 and 1966 and all thirteen grandchildren were born 1963 to 1974.

The Power family had many ups and downs. There were difficult times. Dad had demons that he was able to deal with in 1965 in a positive way, thankfully. Illnesses and accidents came and went, including Jim, at 8 years old with a fractured neck. Luckily, with good care at Hotel Dieu Hospital, he had a full recovery.

In 1975 a great celebration took place in Ottawa at the homestead. Mum was retiring after 20 years of teaching and Dad, with joy, celebrated 10 years in A.A. In the picture are all of us and Mum's sister Pansy Nuttall and Dad's sister Sr. M. Magdalena Power. A special day.

Dad retired the next year and again they were on the move to Wolfe Island where he happily spent his retirement years.

On a final note, I must share my dear Father's last words to me, "I will always love you, Joan."



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