

Roll: **19130930-0709**

Camera: **Monochrome Print: MPS**

Film: **Kodak 116 roll**

**Subject:**

Great Aunt Nelly May Hannett

**Notes:**

In 1884 Queen Victoria was in the 47th year of her reign. Nottingham Corporation Water Department's engineer, Marriott Ogle Tarbotton, started the first modern sewage system outside of London and was the world's first municipal engineer to use subways under the streets to carry public services.

On the old flood plains of the Trent and the River Leam, to the South of the Castle rock, was a thriving working class community. Built mostly by the railway companies and the local factory owners to house their workers, the area had a mix of Victorian housing. There were back to back terraces sharing common yards, two up two downs, substantial bay fronted terraced properties, houses with back entries and tiny back gardens, corner shops and small public houses that would be used by three generations of the same families all living within few hundred yards of the pub.

The main street was one of the busiest shopping thoroughfares in Nottingham. This was Arkwright Street, running from the grand Midland Station, close to the town centre, down to the River Trent at Trent Bridge. Arkwright Street was home to a myriad of independent shops. It had a railway station more or less at each end and two cinemas by the end of 1914.

The area has always been known by the locals as the Medders and it was here, at 164 Arkwright Street, above her Dad's "China and General" shop, that Nelly was born.

Nelly was the seventh child of John and Eliza Hannett. There were two infant deaths in the family. Nelly's youngest sibling when she was born, her brother Percy died when he was six and she was just four years old. Her sister Ethel, born two years after her, died before Nelly was three years old.

By the time of the 1891 Census, conducted on 5th April that year, the spelling of Nelly's name had been changed to "Nellie". Nellie then had a younger sister, Elsie, my Nana, who was born at the beginning of August in 1890. The family of nine had moved further down the road toward Trent Bridge and lived at 205 Arkwright Street where her Dad was a "Furniture Dealer".

While the older girls and her brother had all found work outside the home, Nellie, at 16, remained with her Dad as a "Furniture Dealer's Assistant". Elsie was still at school.

Come the 1911 census, only Nellie and Elsie remained unmarried and at home. Their Dad was sixty one years old and in harness as a salesman to a mineral water manufacturer (almost certainly Redgates in Traffic Street) and the family had moved to 134, Queens Walk. Queens Walk was a tree lined avenue created along the line of an ancient footpath under the 1845 Nottingham Enclosure Act. It was named Queens Walk to commemorate Queen Victoria's visit to Nottingham two years earlier in 1843. The walk passed through the Medders between Midland Station and Wilford Toll Bridge. Nellie was working as a "Draper's Assistant" and Elsie as a "Clerk" to a lace manufacturer.

I have searched for Nellie, off and on, for nearly 3 years but after 1911 there was nothing. No census returns, no marriage registration and no record of death.

Sifting through the big bag of dust and photographs left by my Nana, I periodically puzzled over a picture of the Prince Arthur Hotel in Port Arthur, Canada. None of the Hannetts, as far as I could tell, had had the wherewith all or inclination to embark on any foreign travel, still less the means to go on a transatlantic holiday. There was another picture of what appeared to be a family group "Crossing the Lakes". Was it possible that some well-heeled offshoot of the Hannett or the Fulford family had taken a family trip to the States and once there, travelled on to the Great Lakes, perhaps to Detroit and then across Lake Superior to Port Arthur? My word, that would be a hell of a detour, they would need to be very well-heeled indeed.

Not finding Port Arthur on modern maps, I went on to discover that it no longer exists. In January 1970 it was amalgamated with Neebing, Fort William and McIntyre to become the city of Thunder Bay.

Port Arthur was, in 1913, the terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway and a major transshipment point on the Great Lakes.

Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught and Strathearn, was the third son of Queen Victoria and Governor General of Canada; he consented to the use of his family crest with the Canadian Northern Railway monogram

on the hotels chairs and dishes, The Prince Arthur Hotel completed by the CNR in 1910, was very opulent. Constructed of brick and marble it cost at today's prices (2023) nearly \$26,000,000 to build. Rooms cost \$1.50 to \$2.00 a night or \$2 to \$3 if you wanted the added luxury of a bath. Three dollars in 1913 is calculated to be over \$91 per night today but the hotel's still going and, in fact, rooms are now \$230 Canadian a night.

Having earlier this year found my Grandad Fulford on a trip to New York, I was motivated to try searching for Fulfords or Hannetts on other passenger lists and straight away, bang! There it was. On 3rd September 1913 the "Tunisian" sailed from Liverpool bound for Montreal and Quebec. Among the passengers was someone whose name was transcribed as "Miss ? M Hannett" (the first initial was deemed by the transcriber to be unreadable).

The passenger was 29 years old, single and a shop assistant. Surely this must be Nellie? I got a copy of the original passenger embarkation list and it certainly looked to me like N. M. Hannett and the details fitted exactly. This was no holiday abroad however, for there, in the column "Country of Intended Future Permanent Residence", was "Canada".

Was there in 1913 some assisted passage scheme, used in pursuit of the recruitment of wives for bachelors in Canada I wondered? Well, not that I could find but once again we find the Hannetts playing their role in the tide of history.

1913 was the year of the highest ever migration to Canada, more than 400,000 immigrants arrived that year, most of them from the UK (57%) and the US, With the outbreak of war the following year the numbers migrating fell. The Canadian authorities still did their best to continue to recruit immigrants en masse. In the Government publication "Canada West" it was argued that Canada was effectively an independent country and that military service was voluntary.

*Canada Practically a Self-Governing Country:  
Military Service is Voluntary--No Compulsion or Conscription.  
Canada West 1915 - Front page headline.*

It seems that young, would-be homesteaders, did not believe it and rumours abounded that settlers would be subject to service "at His Majesty's pleasure".

The scepticism proved to be justified as in 1917 Canada did introduce conscription. Disappointingly the overwhelming majority of British settlers supported the change while 3/4 of the French did not and they created riots in Quebec.

Then came a second breakthrough in my search. I had found a genealogy and general public data website called Family Search. It is run by the Church of the Latter Day Saints and is not for profit. Its search engine is complex and difficult to navigate but it seeks to be comprehensive and scrapes all available data from all possible sources of family information around the world. Family Search can find sources in the UK but you still end up paying the genealogy profiteers. This is due to the British Government's policy of privatising public information and allowing the new owners to sell our data back to us but joy and bliss, the ship's manifest, which includes the passenger details, is part of the Canadian record and is freely available.

On the manifest, Nellie is identified as Nellie M Hannett, she is travelling "St 2nd class"; her final destination is Winnipeg, Manitoba; she states that she is a Presbyterian and that her intended occupation in Canada is that of "wife".

Now we get to nub of what Nellie did and the tale that thirteen dusty, battered old photographs; printed on thin, cracked and peeling stock, sometimes roughly cut with scissors, had to tell.

The cash Nellie had with her was just \$15, which under the 1910 immigration act was insufficient funds to be admitted as an immigrant to Canada. "All immigrants, male and female, were required to have a minimum of \$25 upon their arrival in Canada". (According to the Bank of Canada this would equate to approximately \$388 in 2023.)

Written over Nellie's entry, in a very difficult hand to understand, are the words "Promissory to be Married Mec Engineer 4 months in Canada". So it looks to be that Nellie already knew her prospective husband and was making this remarkable journey from Nottingham to Winnipeg to join him. Maybe this was the reason she was admitted with just \$15 in her purse.

An amazing journey began I suppose with the train to Liverpool, probably as part of a package migration fare. This, I imagine, would already be the longest journey Nellie had ever taken. There is no evidence among the dozens and dozens of old photographs that members of the family, at that time, went anywhere other than Skegness. Thinking about it, the logistics of getting a family of nine to the coast and finding suitable accommodation must have been a considerable challenge.



From Liverpool, Nellie set sail aboard the "Tunisian", possibly sharing one of the "four-berth emigrant cabins with spring mattresses" with a family like the one she is photographed with "Crossing the lakes" or she may, like most of the passengers, have travelled steerage.

The journey from Liverpool to Montreal, in good weather, would have taken eight days. The "Tunisian" arrived in the early hours of the morning on 11th September, berthing at Quebec at 6am and disembarking its passengers, 117 Saloon, 292 second cabin and 465 in steerage, by 7am.

I had tried many times to find some record of the boat in which Nellie has a picture taken of herself "Crossing the Lakes". Boats are a big thing on the web and it was frustrating that I could not find the "Sanonie" or the "Saronie" or the "Panorie" or any other possible renditions I tried. I combined the name with many different key words like, Canada, The Great Lakes, Port Arthur, Huron, etc. all to no avail until I hit upon "Saronic" whereupon much was revealed.

The Saronic ploughed the route from Sarnia at the Southern tip of Lake Huron to Fort William (Port Arthur) at the Northern end of Superior; she was the

*"finest vessel on the Great Lakes, Canadian or American, throughout her sailing period"*

*Kathy Dowsett - Sept 2020*

From 1882 until 1905 she was called "Old Betsy" but when taken over and refitted by the Northern Navigation Company she was renamed the "Saronic".

From Quebec there were two possibilities for getting to Sarnia. Nellie could have continued down the Saint Laurence River along Lake Ontario to Niagara-on-the-Lake and Niagara Falls. Her ship would have to have used the second Welland Canal to bypass the Falls into Lake Erie, then it could sail up the Detroit River, passing Detroit and Windsor on the Canadian side, go on past Belle Isle and into Lake St. Clair. Crossing Lake St. Clair it would then sail up the St. Clair River to Sarnia.

(The journey through the southern lakes cannot now be taken by passenger ship. The only possibility is to take a berth on a cargo laker. I have read that a berth on such a laker, travelling much the same route, costs in excess of \$100 US a day and I believe that the journey takes about 6 days but berths are rare and require direct negotiation with the ship owners.)

The alternative in 1913 and the more likely route, was by rail. Nellie almost certainly boarded the Grand Trunk Railway for Sarnia. Today that journey takes little short of 15 hours which means, as the train left at 1pm on Thursday 11th September, Nellie would have arrived in Sarnia by the early hours of Friday 12th September.

At Sarnia she boarded the "Saronic", sailed North the length of Lake Huron, up St. Mary's River to Sault Ste Marie and into Lake Superior for the last leg by boat, to Port Arthur. Given that \$15 budget it is highly likely that, as with many immigrants, she travelled as a deck passenger "shifting" as they say "for herself".

Also at Sarnia I suspect, Nellie bought a camera. Probably a Kodak 2B Box Brownie. The prints I have, vary in size a little, probably due to careless masking and hand cutting but they are approximately 4" x 2.5". I can't find a camera or film that uses that exact format but the Kodak 2B used 116 roll film which at 4.25" x 2.5" gives almost right ratio and the variation could be accounted for as I say, by masking and trimming. The Box Brownie sold for around \$1 US which makes it a very strong candidate given Nellie's budget.

One important thing to note is that Standard 116 film rolls gave only 6 or 12 exposures, so those 13 images would require 2 rolls of film even if every shot came out. That's another \$1.50 already, without developing and printing costs, this suggest I may have most, if not all, of the successful pictures that Nellie took on the trip. A thought which I find strangely disturbing.

It's the camera that convinces me that Nellie travelled by Rail from Quebec. If she was thinking of buying a camera and had the time to do it, Nellie would surely have done so in Quebec before boarding a ship to travel the southern lakes.

The hustle of disembarkation from the Tunisian at 7am, immigration interview, a meal and buying in some food and drink for the GTR rail trip, would be enough to think about without shopping for a camera.

Ships sailing from Sarnia would dock in Port Arthur on the 4th day of a round trip. We know that Nellie was in Port Arthur on Thursday 18th September, If we assume Nellie spent the night in Sarnia and set sail on the Saturday she would arrive in Port Arthur on the 17th and may have stayed at the Prince Arthur; it would be a very expensive option but possibly after 3 nights as a deck passenger on the Saronic, \$2 for a room with a bath would be very attractive.

Travelling the Great Lakes was very different from taking a ferry across Windemere, especially so in 1913:

*The Great Lakes Storm of 1913 (historically referred to as the "Big Blow", the "Freshwater Fury", and the "White Hurricane") was a blizzard with hurricane-force winds that devastated the Great Lakes Basin in the Midwestern United States and Southwestern Ontario, Canada, from November 7 to 10. The storm was most powerful on November 9, battering and overturning ships on four of the five Great Lakes, particularly Lake Huron.*

*The storm was the deadliest and most destructive natural disaster to hit the Lakes in recorded history. More than 250 people were killed. Shipping was hard hit; 19 ships were destroyed, and 19 others were stranded. About \$1 million of cargo weighing about 68,300 tons-including coal, iron ore, and grain-was lost.*

*Wikipedia*

The temperatures had dropped and as the photographs show it was snowing as Nellie took the railroad to Winnipeg. The journey on the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway from Fort William (now Thunder Bay) is no longer available. Most rail transport in Canada is now freight only. The rump of the once great passenger services, just 500 trains per week are operated by a Crown Corporation called Via Rail. There is no service between Winnipeg and Thunder Bay.

What a journey, over 5000 miles as the crow flies. How very, very jealous of my Great Aunt's intrepid travels am I.

The houses, in what I take to be Winnipeg, look much the same as those that can be seen downtown today. The image isn't clear but Nellie might have been photographed on the steps to the house herself. If it is Nellie then that would imply that she did settle here and that the chap on the top of the steps in the earlier photograph is "Mr Promissory".

The Church is very similar to Westminster Church which was completed in 1912 and still stands on Westminster Avenue, but I have taken a virtual trip there with Google Street View and it is not quite right. The image also resembles pictures of the old Broadway Methodist Church but unfortunately that one burnt down in 1968, so I cannot view it to check out the extent of the similarity. Why did Nellie photograph this church I wonder? Nellie does seem rather parsimonious with her pictures, although we must remember that a film roll in 1913 provided a maximum of 12 frames and I have no way of knowing what proportion of the pictures Nellie took "came out" nor what proportion of those came into the hands of Elsie and survived to come into my possession. Could Nellie have been married there? Was she ever married at all? If Nellie sent these pictures home to her Mum and Dad, why aren't there later photographs of her life in Canada?

There is no record that I can find of Nellie marrying in Manitoba province (Births, Marriages and Deaths are publicly available in Canada) but how rigorous was marriage registration in 1913/14 in Winnipeg? Could it perhaps have been an event that was recorded in the church but not transferred to the provincial records? Did Nellie marry at all? Could she, in the face of the appalling weather, have changed her mind about migration to Canada? On September 22nd, two days after Nellie's arrival it was minus five degrees centigrade in Winnipeg. By October 29th it was -15, on Christmas day it was -25.6. Did this induce a swift return to England in time for the 1914 heatwave? How could she afford a return trip with just the change from \$15 and a one and a half thousand mile journey across Canada? If Nellie did return, why is she not to be found in the England & Wales 1921 census records or on the 1939 register?

There is, I suppose, the possibility that Nellie made the whole thing up about the Mechanical Engineer waiting for her in Winnipeg; there is after all no picture of the affianced which, if these pictures were sent to her sister Elsie, is odd don't you think? If Nellie was fibbing that might indeed be the reason why, in late September 1913, Nellie May Hannett at the age of 29 simply disappears. I suppose I will never know.

#### **People:**

Nellie May Hannett.

#### **Dates:**

The date of sailing from Liverpool on the Tunisian is part of the historical record as is the docking in Quebec. "Sep 18/13" is written on the reverse of the photograph of the Port Arthur Hotel. All other dates are calculated from the known data. The time on the last image is taken from the church clock.

**Frames:**

MPS-0004 19130917 12:00:00 Crossing the Lakes.  
TXT-0004 19130917 12:01:00 Back of photograph.  
MPS-0005 19130917 12:05:00 On board the Saronic.  
TXT-0005 19130917 12:06:00 On the "Saronic" crossing the Lakes.  
MPS-0006 19130917 12:10:00 Grain boat crossing the Lakes.  
TXT-0006 19130917 12:10:00 Grain boat crossing the Lakes.  
MPS-0007 19130918 12:00:00 Prince Arthur Hotel.  
TXT-0007 19130918 12:01:00 Sep 18/13.  
MPS-0008 19130919 09:00:00 Boarding for Winnipeg.  
MPS-0009 19130919 09:01:00 Boarding for Winnipeg.  
MPS-0010 19130919 09:10:00 Warmer on board.  
MPS-0011 19130919 15:00:00 Station en route.  
MPS-0012 19130920 08:00:00 Somewhere in Manitoba.  
MPS-0013 19130921 10:00:00 Man on the stoop.  
MPS-0014 19130921 10:30:00 Winnipeg house,dog and person in a white coat..  
MPS-0015 19130921 11:00:00 Winnipeg house.  
MPS-0016 19131029 15:20:00 Church in Winnipeg.



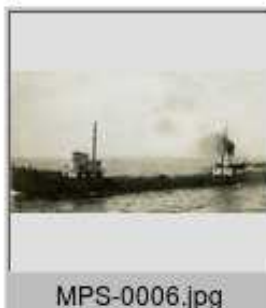
MPS-0014 - Somewhere in Manitoba.



MPS-0004.jpg



MPS-0005.jpg



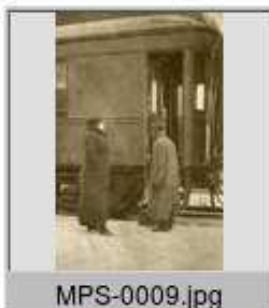
MPS-0006.jpg



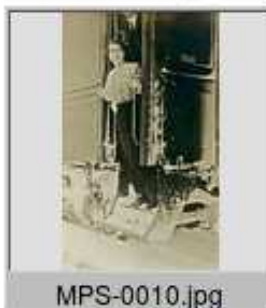
MPS-0007.jpg



MPS-0008.jpg



MPS-0009.jpg



MPS-0010.jpg



MPS-0011.jpg



MPS-0012.jpg



MPS-0013.jpg



MPS-0014.jpg



MPS-0015.jpg



MPS-0016.jpg



TXT-0004.jpg



TXT-0005.jpg



TXT-0006.jpg

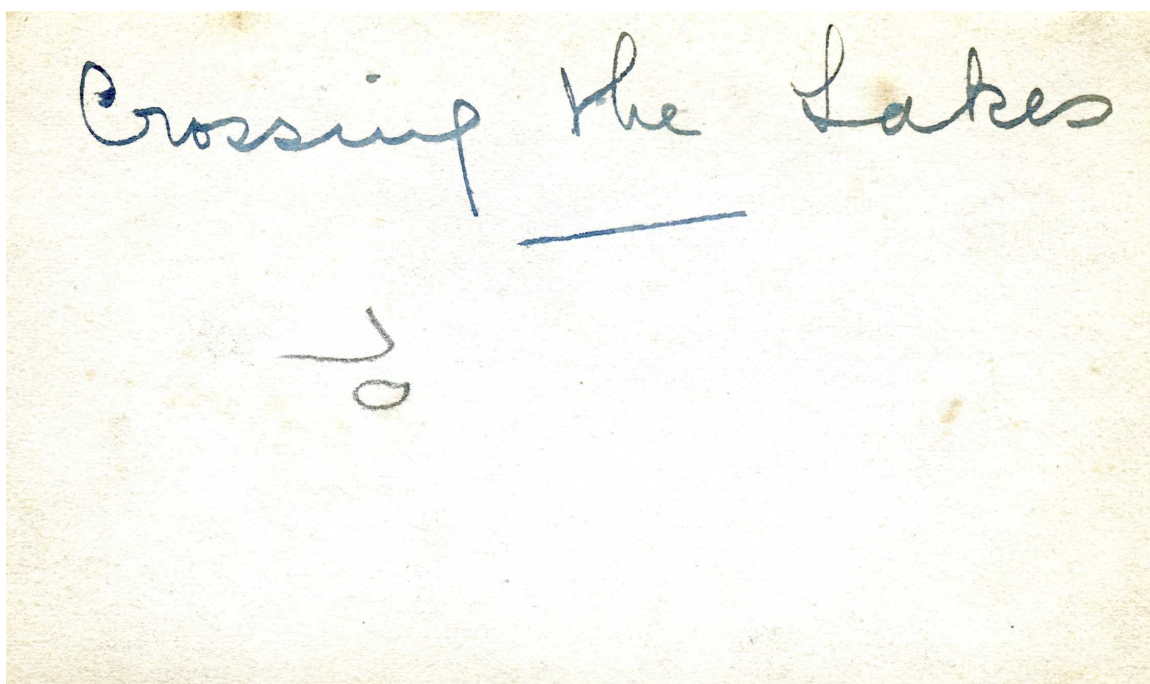


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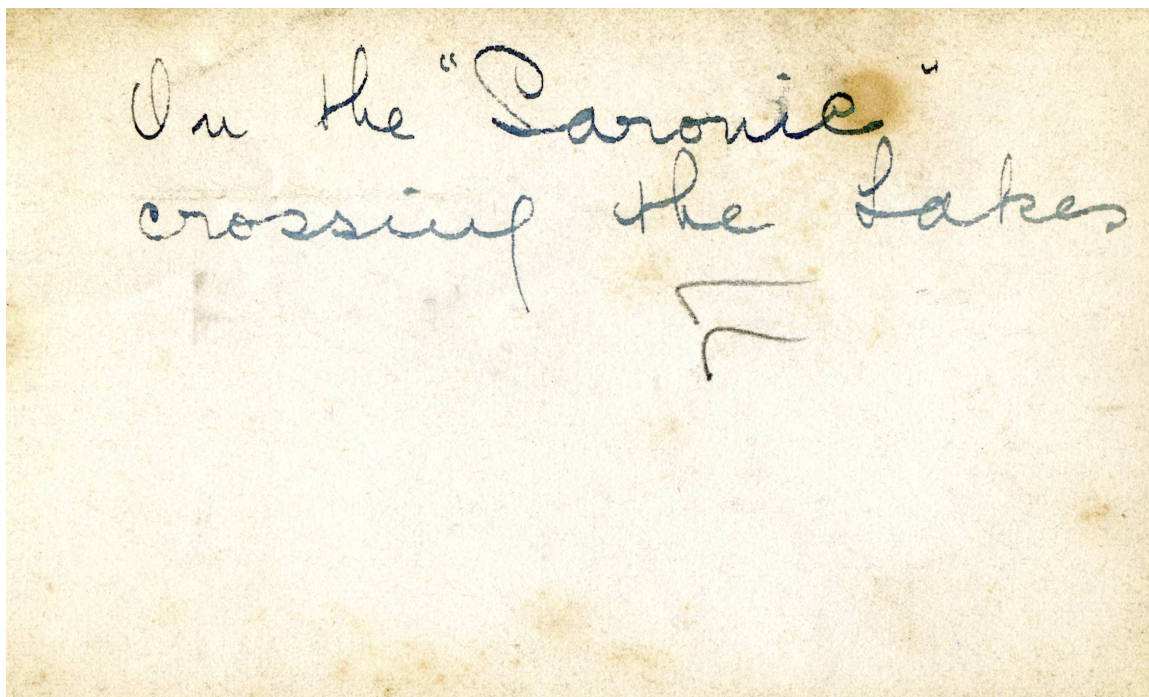


MPS-0004 - Crossing the Lakes.



TXT-0004 - Back of photograph.





TXT-0005 - On the "Saronic" crossing the Lakes.

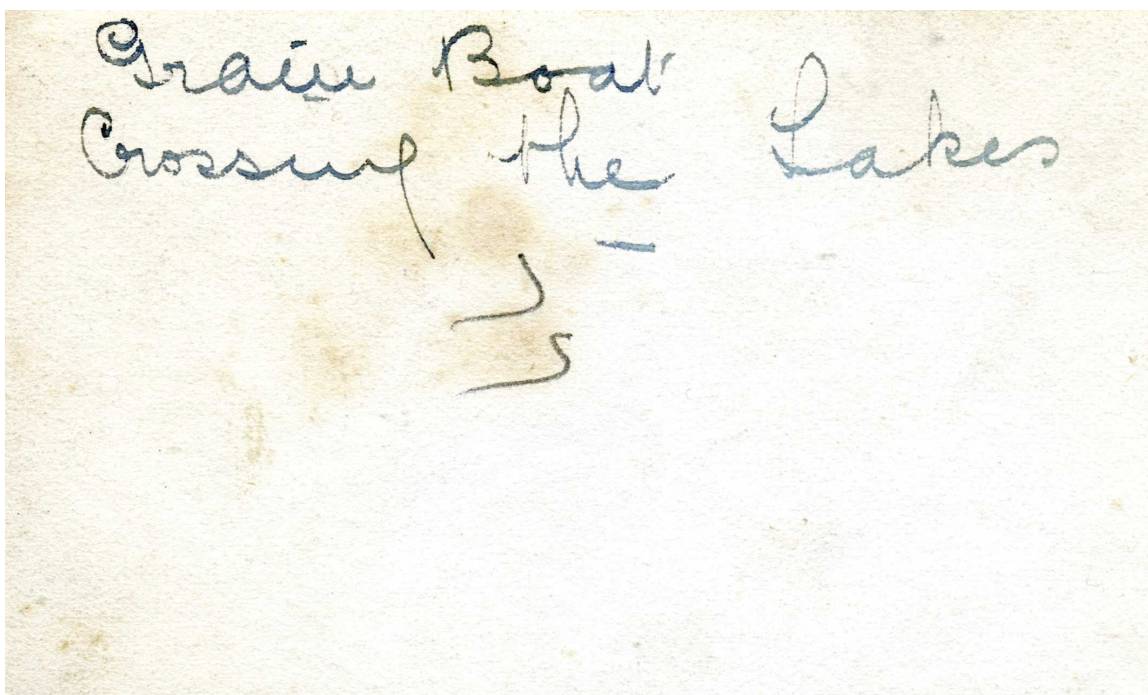


MPS-0005 - On board the Saronic.





MPS-0006 - Grain boat crossing the Lakes.

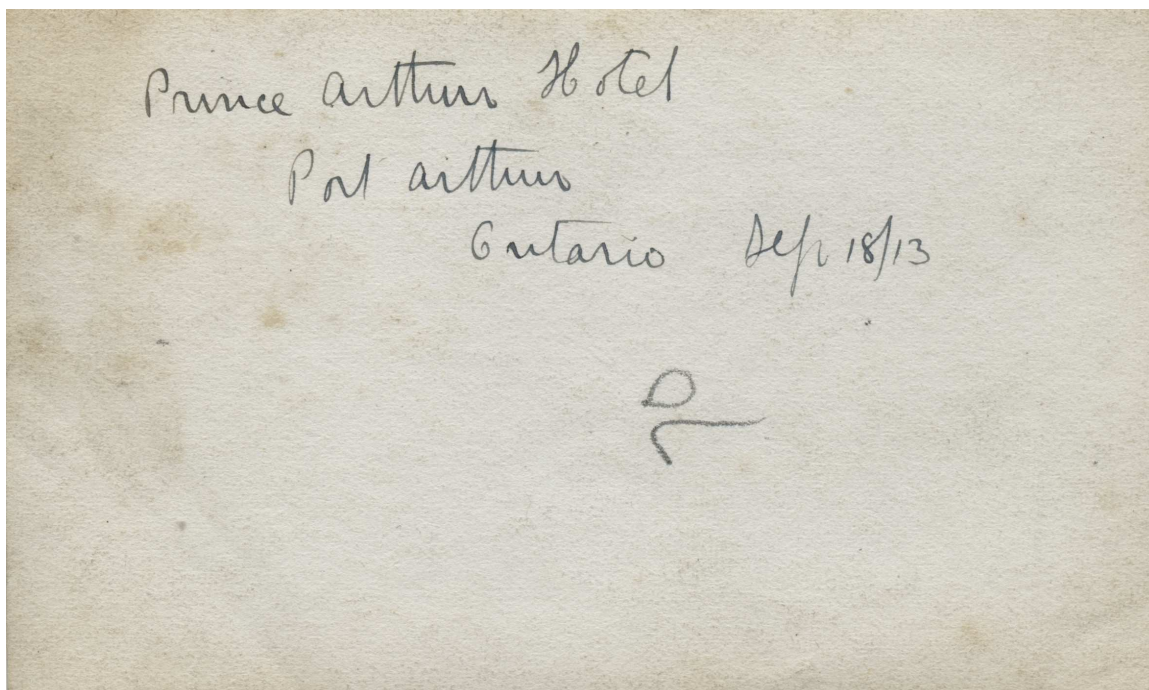


TXT-0006 - Grain boat crossing the Lakes.



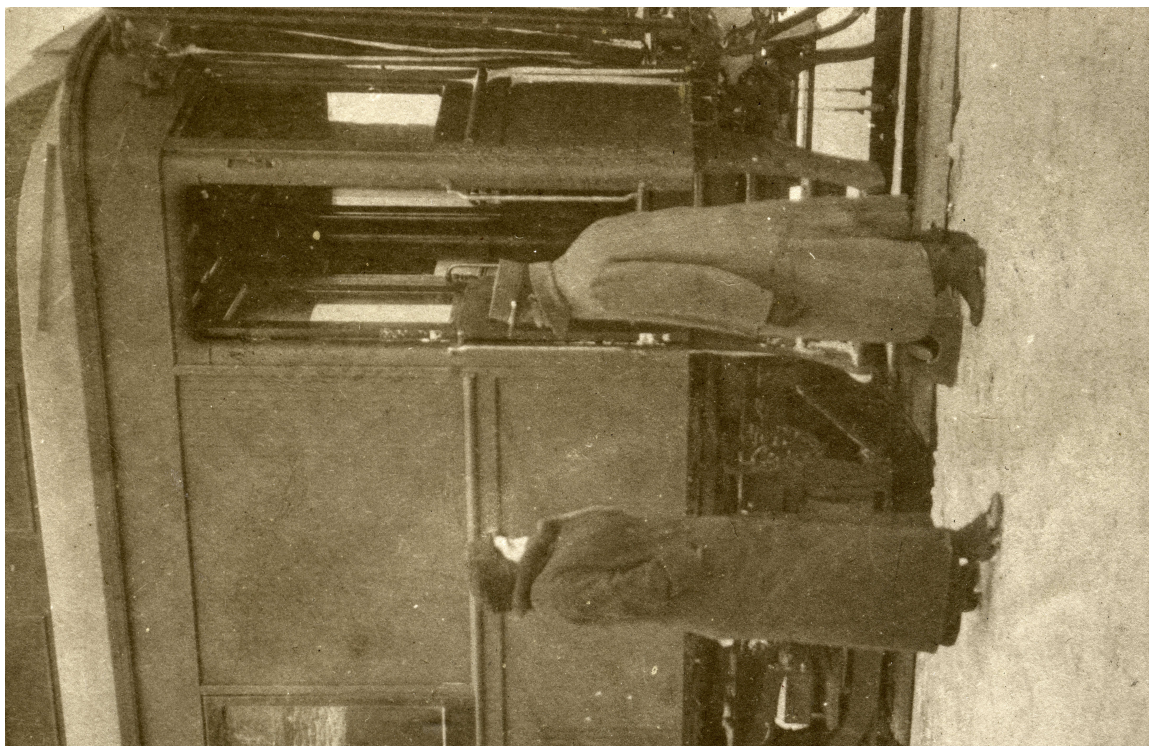


MPS-0007 - Prince Arthur Hotel.

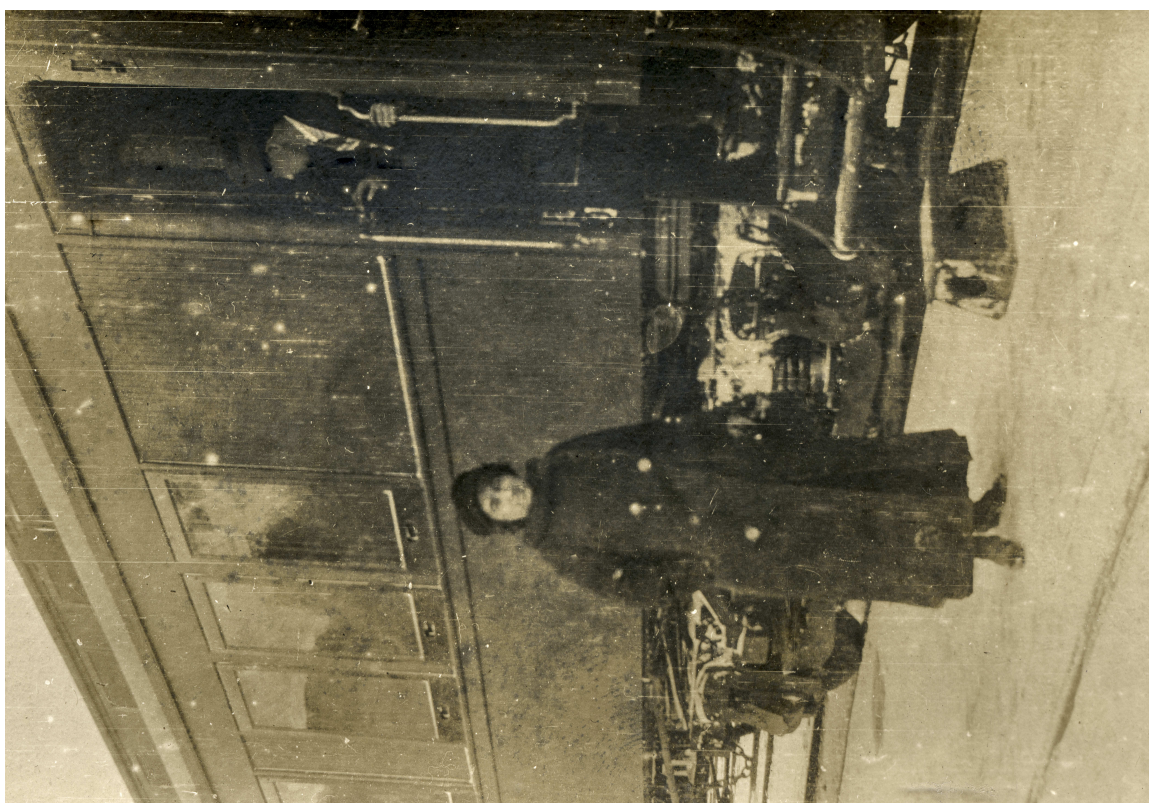


TXT-0007 - Sep 18/13. Prince Arthur Hotel.





MPS-0009 - Boarding for Winnipeg.

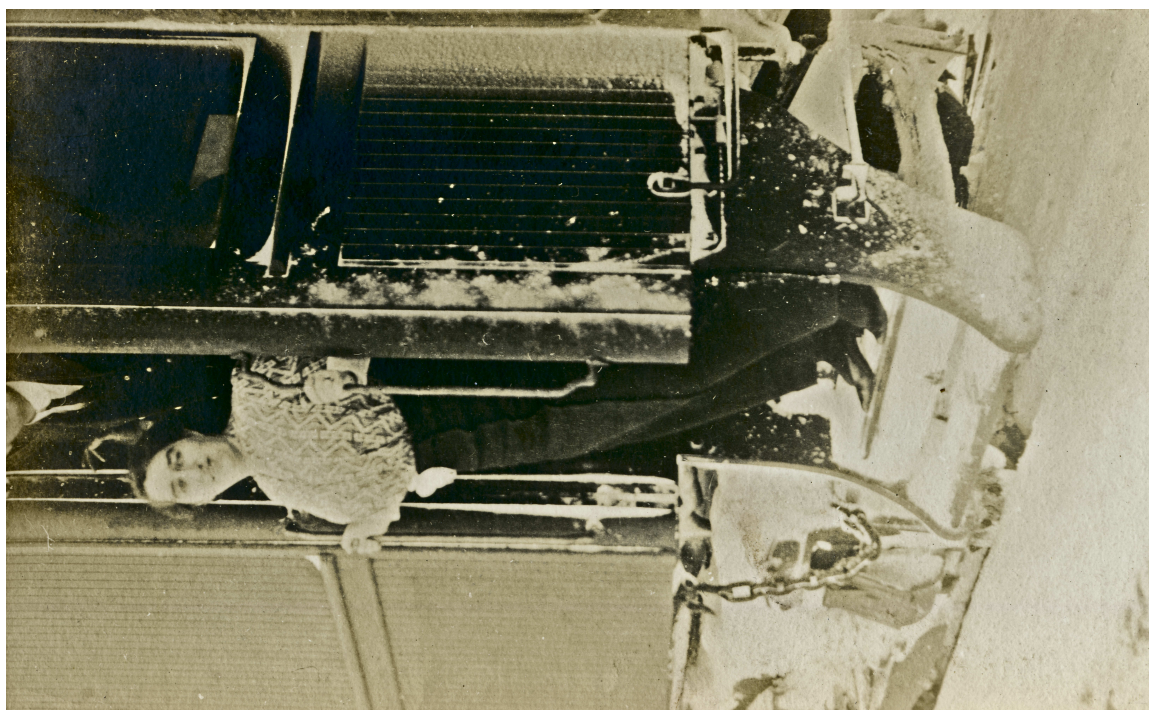


MPS-0008 - Boarding for Winnipeg.





MPS-0011 - Pulling into the station.



MPS-0010 - Warmer on board.





MPS-0013 - Man on the stoop.





MPS-0016 - Church in Winnipeg.