

## OUR ANCESTORS AND THEIR TIMES

### ADDENDA

The following material does not change anything fundamental in the original book published in spring 2021. It reflects more research enabled by the pages from the archives of the Belleville Intelligencer and the internet plus small corrections. Again my thanks to my daughter Heather for her interest and research.

#### THE PHELPS FAMILY

p. 137 The advertisement below from the Trenton Courier adds some perspective to James George Phelps' story..

**J. G. PHELPS,**  
Has a Large New Stock of GLASS-WARE.  
**THE LARGEST AND BEST**  
that has ever been brought to Trenton, and Good Value for  
the Price.  
**Glass Sets, 6 Pieces, 75 Cents**  
**STONE China Tea Sets, 44 Pieces, \$2.25.**  
**Fruits of the Season Oranges Lemons &c.**  
**GODERICH SALT.**  
Be sure and make your selections at the Store of  
**Jas. G. Phelps.**

p. 142 Caption under news advertisement should be spelled 'Koh-i-noor'.

p. 143 Joseph Joshua Phelps stayed until after 1901 on Alfred's farm and is buried in Boroondara General Cemetery in Melbourne.

p. 144 3<sup>rd</sup> line. Date should be 1846.

p. 158 Sarah Eliza Mullett and her brother William Henry Mullett are very important to the future Phelps family. Sarah Eliza became my great grandmother when she married Alfred Phelps. In 1869 William Henry married fellow Quaker Judith Brown in Camden, Lennox and Addington County, the daughter of successful farmers from Moscow in that county. They stayed on the family farm until 1884 then sold the property and moved to the Avondale area, just west of Belleville. They emigrated to Long Beach, California in 1901, lived at 437 Pacific Avenue there and became active and respected community members. William Henry also bought several Long Beach lots. They returned to Ontario twice, in 1908 and 1912. They both had minor injuries from a dreadful accident at Newport Beach Pier in 1913. Quaker friends in 1921 held a party to celebrate their birthdays. Three of the Phelps family visited them in Long Beach. (more below) William Henry died there in November 1925 and Judith in September 1928. Both are buried in Long Beach's Sunnyside Cemetery, Poinsettia section.

Left Indent



p. 166 Sarah Eliza Mullett became my great grandmother when she married Alfred Phelps in 1858. He was then 47 years old. Still they had eight children including Alice who was born in 1864 but died seven years later. (Not shown in the Phelps Family Tree) At the age of 80 in 1891, Alfred sold the west half of Lot 25 to his son George for \$ 1500, the funds coming from a mortgage granted by Judith

Brown Mullett. He died in November 1894 leaving his wife, his daughters and son William as executors. For probate, his estate was valued at \$ 4,000. Sarah Eliza, died in 1911.

p. 163 Eliza Maria was the first child of Alfred and Sarah Eliza Phelps and in March 1869 she married my grandfather, Thomas Gordon Bell, at Elmview, the Phelps family farm. Her younger sister, Laura Melissa, was the bridesmaid. Her first trip away from the Belleville area was not until 1920 when she took the train to Wilkie, Saskatchewan to visit her brother George and family. Then in 1926 she went with her sister, Laura, to spend the four winter months with their sister, Edith, in Whittier, California, a Los Angeles community. She was not well on her return and stayed under the weather until her death in January 1931.

p. 164 After buying the west ½ of Lot 25 in 1891, George became a successful farmer and six years later was appointed Thurlow director of the East Hastings Farmers Institute. In 1909 he announced his plan to sell the farm and move west. Jane Tweedy bought it for \$ 3800 the following year and George and Caroline moved the whole family to Township 39, some 15 miles from Wilkie, Saskatchewan. He returned twice to Belleville: in January 1917 and in July 1949 with his daughter Laura Lucinda after his brother William's death.

p. 166 Laura Melissa Phelps in addition to her teaching was active in social and education circles. She attended the Pan American Exposition in Buffalo in 1901 and the South Hastings Teachers Convention as well as hosting several family visits to her brother William's farm. In 1906 she went with her sister, Edith, to spend the winter months with the Mulletts at Long Beach, California, and returned there in the summer of 1913. That fall she was back teaching at S/S 23 now renamed Melrose School but asked for a transfer. In 1915 she became a teacher at Queen Mary school in Belleville and was soon entertaining the principal and his wife. This school is now closed and on sale but was right across the road from Thomas Bell and her sister's home on Isabel Street. Later she was entertaining members of Tabernacle Methodist Church Apex Club. With six months' leave in early 1919 she took off again for Long Beach returning for the Toronto marriage of her nephew, Arthur Bell, and Alma Vokes in November. Again in 1926 she went to Long Beach and the Mulletts with her sister, Sarah Eliza, Thomas Bell's wife, and stayed two or three years. She became Thomas' second wife in 1932 and carried on with her

church activities welcoming those who attended the Convention of Women's Associations, the Ladies Aid and Church Help Societies and being a delegate to the Women's Missionary Society annual meeting in Picton in March 1935. Later that year she persuaded Thomas to drive to winter at Balboa Island, the holiday home of the Merickel family. As late as 1940 she was on the Finance Committee of Tabernacle church's WMS. Later years brought health problems and she died in a Toronto hospital in October 1952.

p. 167 William Alfred Phelps led an apparently quiet life on the 3rd Concession, Lot 25 farm. He had regular visits from family members and returned these visits locally. His sisters gave him full ownership of the farm in 1915 but in late 1920 he sold it to Fred Rupert for \$ 5,000 and moved into the Hamilton house on the same concession.

p. 168 Edith Sophia Phelps was the last of Alfred and Eliza Maria's children and just like her sister, Laura Melissa, led an active life of travel and social activity. In 1895 at age 22 she was elected president of the Social Department for the Epworth League, a Methodist young people's association. Then in 1906 she and her sister, Laura, left to spend the winter months with the Mulletts at Long Beach. Watson D. Merickel lived there then and it is likely that they met during that visit. The previous year Watson and his brother, wealthy bankers and property owners in Minneapolis, Minnesota, had bought an orange grove at Riverside, California, and Watson decided to make California his home. Edith graduated as a registered nurse from the Connecticut Training School for Nurses in New Haven and when in 1911 both William Henry and Judith fell ill, they asked her to rejoin them in Long Beach. She and Watson were married by a Quaker pastor on 27 April 1915 at the Mullett's home. Their honeymoon took them by ship through the Panama Canal and on to New York from where they proceeded to Belleville and Edith's many relatives. Laura hosted a wedding party for 40 guests at the farm and then went with them to tour the Thousand Islands. They returned to California via Watson's former home in Minneapolis. Five years later and with two young sons, Watson, the two boys and she left the Balboa Island home to visit her Ontario relatives again. Laura was again their host on the family farm just a few months before its sale. The following year Watson bought their city home, E. 516 Camilla Street in Whittier, a Los Angeles community, and Edith lived there for over 20 years with Balboa Island as the family's country home. Edith never slowed down her social

activities. In 1927 she entertained the Wednesday morning Shakespeare Alumni Club of Los Angeles and in September 1930 at Balboa Island she held a picnic for the Garden Section of the Whittier Women's Club. Meanwhile she was racing at the Newport Beach Yacht Club. A bridge lunch for the Whittier Women's Club followed in 1932 and in June 1934 she invited the local PTA to the Balboa home, just weeks after the death of her husband. She soon leased the Whittier home for a year and took the boys for a vacation at Lake Tahoe. Her last visit to Ontario was in 1940 when she and her sons visited Isabel Street and the Spafford farm then spent a happy time with the Bells in Guelph and in their cottage at Thunder Beach on Georgian Bay. Edith again returned to California by ship from New York and the Panama Canal and carried on with her social life hosting a dessert and bridge party later that year. Then in 1941 she took a trip to Mexico and held teas for the Red Cross British War Relief Association. Edith died 31 January 1950 at Balboa Island and is buried in Wall Crypt 13949, Holly Terrace, at the Great Mausoleum in Forest Lawn Memorial Park, Glendale, California, the favoured resting place of the Hollywood stars.

p. 168 Watson Phelps Merickel was Edith and Watson's elder son, born in Los Angeles 9 May 1916. (Important to me, he is the only person I know of who is called Phelps.) After graduating from Stanford, he married Mildred Barbara Warneke at Burlingame, Cal., 17 May 1938. After a year or two as a sales executive in Honolulu, they rented a house in Palo Alto, Cal. but enjoyed a handsome life style thanks to income from his father's estate. He joined the US Navy in 1942 and welcomed his first son, Ronald Phelps Merickel that same year. In the remaining war years he served in the Caribbean and on convoy duty in the Atlantic. For some years they lived in the San Fernando Valley until in 1959 they settled on Balboa Island. Phelps became very involved with ocean sailing and was soon treasurer of the Newport Harbour Yacht Club. Along with his wife they bought La Quinta acreage in Palm Desert in 1965 but Balboa continued to be their primary home and the place where he died 26 August 1992.

p. 168 Edith and Watson's second son was Bruce Arthur Phelps Merickel born 17 December 1918 in Los Angeles. He lived with his brother and family and his mother in Palo Alto and worked for Montgomery Ward in Oakland. He graduated from Stanford in 1941 and that year married Jayne D. Follansbee born about 1921 in New Jersey. The next year he joined the US Army Reserve and was

commissioned a 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant in 1944. Post-war their daughter, Dawn Voelker Merickel was born. Their son, Michael Bruce Merickel arrived the following year but he died in 1993 leaving his own son, Frank. By 1950 Bruce lived in Fremont, Cal. on Oakland Bay and worked as an insurance broker. Later he moved to Medford, Oregon and worked with Harris, Upham, security and commodity brokers. Bruce died at Lincoln, Oregon 17 July 1991.

p. 120 His sisters gave ownership of the Lot 25 to William in 1915 and it was sold in 1920.

p. 121 The picture was taken in 2011.

What have we learned about the Phelps family? They were born into families with traditional Quaker practices and in most cases retained these practices through much of their lives. William Henry Mullett and his wife Judith were part of the Quaker community in Long Beach and their daughter and husband, Alfred and Eliza Maria Phelps were also married in a traditional Quaker procedure and came to the meetings in Bloomfield as late as 1882. But neither of these couples was buried in a Quaker cemetery. The one person who carried on with the Quaker connection was Edith Phelps Merickel in Long Beach. Quaker practices in the family were essentially gone by the beginning of the 20th century largely replaced by Methodist teachings and institutions

As to their lifestyle, Laura Melissa and Edith Sophia were outgoing and always reaching for a broader life than that offered around Belleville. Their siblings, Sarah Eliza and William Alfred seemed content to stay in the local scene albeit socializing together and being hospitable to visitors on many occasions. George's social life is unknown to us but we had the courage to leave his successful farm for the unknown Saskatchewan acreage.

## THE BELL FAMILY

p. 360 Hiram Bell married Elva Jane Hoard at Fannings Hotel in Belleville in 1856. At age 84 she went to live with her daughter, also Elva Jane, and her husband William Edward Main in West Monroe, Oswego, New York. She died in nearby Sherburne, New York, in 1922 and her funeral was held at Thomas Bell's home on

Isabel Street, Belleville. She was buried with her husband in the old Wesleyan Methodist cemetery in Frankford.

p. 361 Calvin Manley Bell died in Virden, Manitoba, in 1927, and his funeral too took place at Isabel Street. His burial site is unknown.

p. 363 Thomas Bell and Sarah Eliza Phelps were married at Elmview, Alfred Phelps' farm. No connection to the nearby St. Andrew's Gilead Methodist Church is known but Thomas was a dedicated Methodist and lifelong member of Tabernacle Methodist/United Church in Belleville. As examples he attended a week's devotions in Grace Methodist Church in Napanee in 1913 and was chosen to address a Peace Service at the Tabernacle just after the end of WW I. He was often a pallbearer when friends died and his home was the site of a number of family funerals. The 1935 motor trip to and from California for a man over 70 who had never before been outside Ontario must have been a challenge. But undoubtedly encouraged by his more travelled second wife, Laura Melissa Phelps, they covered many notable sites including the petrified forest in Las Vegas, Arizona, and brought home many souvenirs.

p. 374 Alice Mable Bell, the elder daughter of Thomas and Sarah Eliza, was named after the daughter of Alfred and Eliza Maria Phelps who died at age seven in 1864. Music was important in Alice's life: she led the entertainment at her parents' 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in 1914 and as late as 1940 led the WMS band with her son, Gordon, playing the cornet.

P. 369 Arthur Phelps Bell, my father, was also active in Tabernacle Methodist Church activities. He was reported as the umpire for a Sunday School baseball game and debating for the church team in 1913. After an extra course in stenography in June 1913 he graduated from the Belleville Business College. His first job then was office work in Trenton with Trent Canal contractors, Rogers, Miller and Co. for \$ 50 per month. After his RNAS service, he arrived back in Belleville in July 1919 and three months later married Alma May at her parents' home, 228 Rusholme Road in Toronto. The guest list of 125 included his parents, his sisters, three siblings of his stepmother and Elza Jane, his grandmother and the widow of his grandfather, Hiram Bell.



In comparison to the Quaker Phelps, the Bells were relatively uneducated. Thomas' father and grandfather were both illiterate according to the census and generally seemed content with their rural life. Thomas was alone in moving east from the farm on the Trent River at an early age. His elder brother John and his family clearly became important figures in that area but there is no record of Thomas ever again seeing his siblings until some of their funerals. This surely overstates their separation but still contrasts with the Phelps almost endless gathering and entertaining. The Phelps' Quaker heritage of almost 2 ½ centuries explains some of the difference. Until 1865 they were not allowed to marry outside their religion and were often compelled to travel some distance to find a spouse. Accordingly, they tended to keep to themselves and socialize among friends and relatives of the same creed.

Thomas Gordon Bell was a dedicated Methodist as were my mother, Alma May Vokes, and my father. In Guelph their social circle consisted largely of Dublin Street United Church and other Protestant friends. If my brothers or I mentioned an obviously Irish name among our friends, it inevitably immediately raised the question as to whether they were Catholic. Their great grandchildren consider questions of religious background out of date and irrelevant if not reprehensible.

Phelps Bell  
Toronto  
January 2024.

