Untitled Memoir of Elizabeth Bingham Young, 1927

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The text that follows is transcribed from pages 119 to 180 of Elizabeth Young’s daybook, with added inserts as described in the introduction. Headings in quotation marks are Elizabeth’s own; others are my own. Daily diary entries that immediately precede and follow her memoir date from 1927, and a diary entry written on pages 120 and 121 is dated 9 July 1927, suggesting that Elizabeth began to compose the text at that time. A statement on page 123 implies a date of 1928: it reads, “July 29, 1868. Just sixty years ago, we arrived at Norway House & Rossville mission, where we were appointed to be missionaries to the Cree Indians.” Page 173, however, reinforces the memoir’s date as 1927; there, Elizabeth noted that she had just attended her sister Clara’s fiftieth wedding anniversary, and Clara was married on 18 September 1877.

“1859 & Sixtys”

In the fiftys and sixtys there was a happy & joyous little girl filling the hearts of home, & making melody. Sisters and brothers came, but being the eldest the right to superintend was hers, & she took the position; we had many friends many visitors some agreeable.

We had a black mammy and her Neddie who came yearly to visit us. They would take all we could give them & ask for more. Where they came from we could not tell, but they were most interesting.

Indians came with their baskets for sale, they came from Rama & Rice Lake, they were easy & happy go lucky people.¹

¹ The Ojibwe reserves of Rama and Rice Lake were established on the eastern shore of Lake Couchiching and the north side of Rice Lake, Ontario, respectively. Both had
In winter time, sleigh riding all kinds of sliding, skating, evening parties games, puzzles, guessing games, Forf[e]it games, phillip[i]ne game, interesting.  

All through the sixties my young life was very happy, making home happy & summer time picnics. Visiting in the country, often making neighbours happy, in many ways, in sickness, soothing & comforting the dying. In Church work, so happy, in choir singing, in school work, in temperance work, in whatever work interested our Town. Concerts, Tea parties, I was interested beyond measure. It seemed a real pleasure, to be useful, and appreciated by our neighbours & friends.

Leaving Home

On December 25, 1867, I left my dear Mother & my home, in the Town of Bradford, Simcoe Co., Ontario, Canada, for Toronto where my dear Egerton & I were married in the old Methodist Church on Adelaide Street, which is now the Metropolitan Church. We were married by the Rev. Egerton Ryerson. We took dinner in the old Ros[s]in House & then went to Hamilton, where we were very kindly received. It was a wonderful change for me, from a sad home, for the same year in August my Father & Brother passed away leaving us prostrate with grief. But all this of my going away active Methodist missions. The making and selling of basketry were important to the livelihood of Ojibwe women for many decades.

2 Forfeit, or Forfeits, is an old game in which each player puts a personal item in a pile behind a judge. One player standing behind the judge holds up each item and says, “Heavy, heavy hangs over thy head. What shall the owner do to redeem the forfeit?” The judge, without looking up, then directs the owner to do an act or stunt to redeem the item (www.childrenparty.com/partygames/printversion/forfeits.html, accessed 27 January 2013). Philippine, or Philippina, was another amusement: a person finding a nut with two kernels eats one and gives the other to a person of the opposite sex; when they next meet, the first one to say “Good morning Philippine” is entitled to a present from the other (OED).

3 Elizabeth’s memoir is interrupted at this point by a diary entry dated 9 July 1927, describing a country excursion that took place that day.

4 The Rossin House Hotel was an elegant five-story hotel at the corner of King and York streets in Toronto. Opened in 1857, it suffered a serious fire in 1862. It reopened in August 1867, four months before the Young’s marriage.
was arranged while my Father was still alive. Yet to have put it off would only complicate matters. Mother was not alone, for three Sisters and one Brother were with her.⁵

We were not blessed with earthly goods, for my dear Father was a very hard working man but met with misfortune, not through carelessness. My Father was a good Christian had a responsible place in the Methodist Church & the full respect of all especially the young people, who loved & had the greatest respect for him, for his goodness, his kindness; for his church classes he had two one in the town, one a little way out of the town. If any were sick & not able to attend they were immediately visited, & if in need at once looked after his love & care was appreciated. The love of his people was shown when he passed away when they looked after his funeral & put up a monument in memory of him.⁶

Although leaving home I could not forget the love & care of both my Father & Mother and many times the heart & thoughts would recall the past, & thank God for his care & love, & leadings in the good and true way & now I can look back with nothing but a true & thankful heart that my way was so lovingly guarded & pleasantly and sweetly cared for. For now I can only see & feel that God for Christ’s sake had me in His special keeping. Many proffers of more than friendship came to me, but the unseen hand kept watch until the right one came, then there was no diffidence or trouble, & I am today full of thankfulness to my loving & Heavenly Father for His watchfulness care over one so unworthy. I can sing truly “Praise God from whom all blessings flow.”

⁵ The siblings were Sarah, aged fifteen, Joseph, aged thirteen, Clarissa, aged ten, and Charlotte, aged nine (Bingham family tree, in Wilson Brown, family history files). Their widowed mother took in boarders to maintain the family; excerpts from her letters appear in Part III, sec. 4.

⁶ The first Wesleyan Methodist church was built in Bradford in 1857, Joseph Bingham being named as one of its four trustees. He and his son John, aged eighteen, died of typhoid on 19 and 21 August 1867, respectively, and were buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery, Bradford. His monument, a tall column mounted on pedestals, is inscribed, “Erected by the Members of Mt. Pleasant Class to the memory of our late leader Joseph Bingham who departed this life August 19, 1867, aged 47 years 10 months.” Loretta Skidmore and Richard Rawson, compilers, History of Our Heritage Past and Present (California: Privately printed, 2012), 75, with photograph of the monument (supplied by Wilson Brown). Skidmore and Rawson cite the work of several researchers on the Bingham family.
The Invitation to the North West
From “The Bride of 1868”:

Little did I dream when I left my home that as a missionary would I be counted worthy to go, for in my young days I had been nursed in a Christian home, and now the fulfillment of my early wishes and desires I was willing to leave home, friends & with my newly found treasure go to the “West.” . . . This was December, we got the New Years over and was settling down when a written Invitation came for us to go to the N.W. as missionaries, which very much unsettled us for the moment, for we must decide quickly. So we began to think & decide, my beloved’s church were all very much opposed to losing their much loved Pastor, for they had just had some very interesting Revival meetings and many new members were added to the church. The President of the Ladies [Wesleyan Female] College was the only one who gave my beloved any encouragement, he thought it was just the climate for his Constitution, but he was the only one.7 But with a good deal of serious thought & prayer we decided to go, so from that moment we were getting ready and seemingly up-set & divided in our thought and work. We had many invitations here & there, the friends could not show us too much kindness and attention.

From Hamilton to Detroit
July 29, 1868. Just sixty years ago, we arrived at Norway House & Rossville mission, where we were appointed to be missionaries to the Cree Indians.

7 Young, in By Canoe and Dog-Train (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1890), 29, also tells of the sole fellow minister, presumably the same man, who supported his going — having abruptly turned down a mission request years before with dismal consequences. On the college and its role in educating another mission wife, see Jan Hare and Jean Barman, Good Intentions Gone Awry: Emma Crosby and the Methodist Mission on the Northwest Coast (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006), 3–6. The school’s name varied between “Ladies” and “Female” College.
On May the tenth 1868, having everything arranged, settled, and farewells all said we parted from our Hamilton friends. [In her diary, 9 May 1868, Elizabeth wrote: “We have already bid adieu to my dear Ma and sisters in Canada and my own dear brother Joey, and also those dear brothers by marriage, we have yet to say goodbye to Pa Young. . . . We meet so many friends who were or seemed very anxious for our special welfare, this we thank God for.”]

My beloved had first closed a very successful term of years and all were happy with a large number of members added to the church who were grieved at his departure, yet all wished us well.

_We embarked at Thorolds._ [Thorold, on the Welland Canal. According to Elizabeth’s diary (13 and 14 May), they traversed the Welland Canal and Lake Erie on 13 May, reaching Detroit around midnight.]

The Officials of the Hamilton First Church were very much surprised & grieved at their official meeting, at the close of the year of 1867. My husband announced his intention of devoting his life to mission work among the Indians of the Hudson Bay district.

The Board expressed its appreciation of him in the following resolution: “We the members of the quarterly board of Hamilton City East Circuit, cannot allow our beloved Pastor & his wife to depart without an expression of our high appreciation of their services amongst us. His faithfulness, zeal and affection have endeared him to all our hearts, and we pray that he may be equally successful in winning souls for Christ, in the land to which he journeys.”

8 The “brothers by marriage” were James Strong and William Sibley, to whom Elizabeth’s sisters Mary Anne and Eleanor (Nelly) were married, respectively; “Pa Young” was William Young, Egerton’s father. In his diary entry for 11 May, Egerton also described their departure: “Our last day in Hamilton. Spent the day in packing up for our journey. Paid up Bills. Made a few visits and said goodbye to many dear friends and last of all to my dear aged father Rev. W. Young, loaded up my democrat.” (A democrat is “a light four-wheeled cart with several seats, one behind the other”: _oed._)

9 For the full text, see Part III, sec. 1.
The Travelling Party
Elizabeth’s diary, 14 May, reads: “The rest of our party joined us. Now our Missionary company is complete.” The members of the party, some of whom had joined the group in Detroit by rail, were the following:

Mrs Young 45. Their Son George 16. [To establish the Methodist Church in Red River (Winnipeg).]
Matthew Snyder age 22. Teacher. Ira Snyder age 18. Teacher.11
Geo. A Caswell Age 25 farmer
Enoch Skinner 12.12

10 Georgina McDougall had been attending the ladies college and was returning with her father to the family’s mission home at Victoria, in Saskatchewan. She died of smallpox on 1 November 1870, aged eighteen. John Maclean, The Hero of the Saskatchewan: Life Among the Ojibway and Cree Indians in Canada (Barrie, on: Barrie Examiner Printing and Publishing House, 1891), 25.

11 According to Young, the Snyders, younger brothers of Mrs. Campbell, “had consecrated themselves to the work as teachers among the distant Indian tribes” in Saskatchewan. See By Canoe and Dog-Train, 32.

12 Egerton Young’s diary, on a page dated 20 April 1868, listed everyone’s names and most of their ages and occupations; the Youngs were the most junior missionaries in the group. At least half of the party was bound for Saskatchewan with the Reverend George McDougall: he and his daughter Georgina, the Campbells, the Snyder brothers, and Enoch Skinner. Enoch Wood Skinner spent several years with the McDougall family, learned Cree, returned to Ontario, then was sent back to Saskatchewan as assistant to the Reverend John McDougall, but died in a gun accident on the way. See Maclean, Hero of the Saskatchewan, 25.
Detroit to Milwaukee, St. Paul, and Red River
The journey from Detroit to Milwaukee took the Youngs across Lake Michigan. In her diary, Elizabeth wrote on 16 May: “Had a violent attack of sea sickness. Neptune demands an offering. Allmost too indisposed to rise, however mustered up courage to leave my birth, food repugnant. Mr. George Young kindly came in and gave me a little port which made me feel very much better.” The following day, the lake was quite rough, and both Elizabeth and Mrs. George Young were too sick to leave their staterooms: “we had to lie right down and lay there all day pretty near.” Her husband evidently fared better. His diary entry for 17 May reads: “That disagreeable disease sea sickness has prostrated many. . . . I am kept in perfect health as well upon the sea as upon land.”

In her memoir, Elizabeth continued:

When we reached Milwaukee we were detained by the Customs, on account of the horses. So several days were lost on our journey. However my husband had a wedding, & as Mr McDougal’s Daughter Georgenia was troubled with Rheumatism [“That is why she left Hamilton College and nothing would do but she must come with her Father, home”], and had no flannel under clothes, the Ladies of the partie improved the opportunity & secured some flannel & insisted on my doing the cutting out, & very soon we had the dear girl comfortable in nice warm flannels. [Elizabeth’s diary, 18 May: “I cut out two pairs of drawers and partly made one pair.”]

13 Young, By Canoe and Dog-Train, 33, noted delays over the horses (they had fourteen) and other goods; a telegraph to Washington was required to persuade “the over-officious officials” to let them pass. In Manitoba Memories: Leaves from My Life in the Prairie Province, 1868-1884 (Toronto: William Briggs, 1897), 55, George Young wrote that despite prior letters from the us consul in Toronto, the Milwaukee officials “demanded duty on the entire outfit ere we could be allowed to proceed.”

14 In his diary, Young noted on 18 May: “Had the felicity of uniting in connubial bliss two young people who came in search of a parson. Happiness to them!”

15 The Hamilton college was the Wesleyan Female or Ladies College mentioned above. Flannel was “an open woollen stuff of various degrees of fineness,” which was “highly recommended by medical men as a clothing, both in hot and cold climates, from its properties of promoting insensible perspiration.” See “Flannel,” Encyclopedia Britannica, vol. 9 (1878), 292, which also noted the enormous quantity of flannel manufactured in and exported from England in the period.
We took the train on the Lacross[e] Railroad [19–20 May] to the Miss[iss]ippi boats up to St Pauls; here we were at the point where we had to prepare for the Prairies, by procuring such things as dried fruits, Bacon, sugar, tea, flour, and all necessaries, for after leaving this point it would be impossible to be able to get anything in the way of food. We were advised not to forget anything, even salt [“as it is the last of stores or shops we will see for days weeks yea months. The H.B.C. Stores will be all we will see and those are only to exchange for the furs of the Indians. I remember when very much in need of some special article, and asked them for it; that was there answer, ‘We are not here to serve Whites.’ That answer was not needed twice, I did without.”]

We had to prepare against mosquitoes, black flies, sand flies, bull dog flies. The women folks got some Quaker poke bonnets, mosquito Skreening, made long veils & weighted them down with shot.16 This done & many other little necessaries accomplished, horses ready, wagons ready, Carts ready, harness all in good shape. It was wonderful to see what a wonderful procession we made. Now [27 May] we were off and our first night on the Prairie.

The party next stopped near Clearwater, Minnesota, on the west side of the Mississippi River not far from its headwaters. Some of them stayed at the “Linden Hotel,” where Elizabeth was able to bake bread for the trip (diary entry, 30 May). On 1 June, Elizabeth wrote in her diary: “Through the blessing of God we were enabled to make another start on our journey. Our poney is very sick and almost unable to draw us let alone much of a load. About ½ past 4 you might have seen us starting, a small stove hanging to the top of the waggon also a tea kettle and a yeast pail” (whereupon the Youngs caught up with the rest of the party).

Just as we were busy getting ready for the night our carts & wagons arranged in horse shoe fashion & tied together & our

16 Poke bonnets had a distinctive cylindrical shape protruding around the face. As they resembled an inverted coal scuttle, they were sometimes called coal-scuttle bonnets (OED). Elizabeth also mentioned this sewing session in a diary entry for 22 May. There, she referred to the bonnets as “shakers,” evidently equating Shaker with Quaker: “We are busy. I am trimming some shakers & Mrs [George] Young’s making a pair of drawers for Miss McDougal.” (Elizabeth often spelled “McDougall” without its final l.)

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horses hobbled for fear of there wandering away, we were very much surprised excited & perplexed to see flying towards us men on horseback coming. Soon [we] found out that they were Indians who thought we were Americans & were on the war path. They had lately had some misunderstanding and were very much imbittered and very angry. They, the Indians, called the Americans Keche-mookimen (long-knives) and if it had not been for our “British flag,” the Union Jack, we would have been badly treated. That is [our] no. 1, Introduction to the Indian Country.17

Day in and day out we had peculiar incidents, interruptions, such as the breaking of wooden [Red River] carts that were constructed without a bit of iron in any point whatsoever, consequently you could hear them as far as we could see them. There were days we had to carry water from one point to another, and our firewood was Buffalo chips. Narrow escapes from accidents occurred very often as our companions carried fire arms, so as to assist in our menues. One day our Leader [George McDougall] shot a goose, and divided it amongst the party, my part was a leg. It must have descended from the Ark, for tough was no name for it.

We camped early, and in the morning struck our tents early, preparing the night before as far as we could our lunch for the next day, so that there would be no midday delay. Sunday was sacredly kept. We had service in the morning, and the after part of the day was spent in resting.18

17 Egerton Young’s diary ends on 26 May and so omits this incident, and Elizabeth’s diary entries are sporadic after 2 June, but see Young, By Canoe and Dog-Train, 38–39: When settlers warned the party about dangers of Sioux attacks, George McDougall told them, “We have a little flag that will carry us in safety through any Indian tribe in America.” When the Sioux horsemen approached a few days later, “our Union Jack fluttering from the whip stalk [a stick or staff to which the lash of a whip is attached: οέδ] caused them to fling their guns in the grass and come crowding around us with extended hands. . . . At Mr. McDougall’s orders we stowed away our rifles and revolvers . . . and met them as friends, unarmed and fearless.” American relations with the Sioux were at a low point following the Minnesota Sioux uprising of 1862 and the government’s reneging on treaty commitments; Young detailed the dismal treatment that had been accorded to the Dakota chief, Little Crow, and his people.

18 On 17 June, Elizabeth wrote in her diary: “We are near Fort Abercrombie [North Dakota] . . . the glorious sun shining brightly upon us and plenty of wildflowers, Indians,
Excitement and experience often occurred. One day as we crossed from American Territory we threw out [hoisted] our Union Jack and our American horses ran away. Our guide said, “Let them run; they will soon get tired” as they were loaded down with Missionary Luggage.19

One other day it took nearly all our horses to pull one heavy laden wagon out of a deep revine & those that were left, were being so stung with bull dog flies, that one of [our] sympathetic women made a smudge fire and before we were aware of it, the prairie grass was on fire. Now our leader who had just reached the top of the revine with the other members of the party called out, every man to his place, and away we went with the wind blowing the fire away from us, so for days we were exposed to a Prairie fire.

We were glad if we found a farmers home so that we might get some milk or eggs or butter, but alas these commodities were all too scarce.

Fierce wind storms came and unless our things were tied securely they would fly from us, never to be seen again. On the Prairies we were exposed to hot sun, wind storms, rain storms, thunder storms.

I made yeast, mixed bread, put it to rise as we were journeying along, and when we camped for the night, I borrowed the Frenchmans sheet iron stove & baked some bread & buns. This was a new experience travelling on the Prairies, but a very acceptable one, for all enjoyed the agreeable change.

and from the Fort we can hear the bugle sounding which makes it feel quite civilized again. . . . We have been drinking whisky . . . I mean drinking water from a stream called Whiskey Creek.” In Manitoba Memories, 58–59, George Young described this fort, which had been besieged by the Sioux in 1862, as “a few log-houses and long stables, and one miserable store . . . and a sort of wooden structure called a ‘fort.’” Whiskey Creek was “a miserable mire-hole and unbridged,” so his party had to fill it with bushes and brush, “and then dash our tired horses across the abominable place and up a steep bank, as best we could.”

19 George Young recalled that, on passing from Pembina “into our good and beloved Victoria’s dominions,” all “joined heartily in singing the national anthem,” and “our loyal brother, E. R. Young, hoisted the Union Jack, a beautiful flag with which he was presented in Canada” (Manitoba Memories, 62).
Even Mr George McDougall came without invitation as soon as he heard of the home made bread.20
   Prairie chickens was another pleasant & agreeable change.
While I drove the horse Egerton used the gun.
   Our days were long. We struck our tents early in the morning & only rested at noon long enough for the horses & ourselves to lunch, & then we camped early, which was a good & sensible thing to do.

Sojourn at Red River
After many days of wonderful experiences, & dangerous adventures, we camped on the shores of “Lake Assiniiboine” [the Assiniboine River, swollen by spring flooding]. The smoke from our camp fires went down and curled on the lake. When Egerton saw this, he assured us that we were going to have a storm, and immediately prepared for it by using long laid up rope that was given to him by one of his Parishiners, as we were leaving Hamilton. This rope he used by tying up Dr George’s & our tents. The storm came in the night and we were up & busy holding our tent from blowing away, tents & wagons carts were more or less blown down & much confusion.21 Georgenia McDougal who was ill with Rheumatism her tent was down, Egerton went for her & put her in our tent making her comfortable. This was our farewell to our long tedious journey of marvellous experiences. We certainly were Pioneers to the lone land of the North West Territory.

20 In “The Bride of 1868,” Elizabeth quoted McDougall as saying: “I do not wait for an invitation when there is anything good I come.”

21 Elizabeth also made note of the storm in her diary entry for 3 July: “a dreadful hurricane of wind came up throwing down tents . . . and those of us that had tents up we had to hold onto them with all our strength.” See Part 111, sec. 2, for Egerton’s story of “the rope from Hamilton” and his detailed account of the storm, described there as a “cyclone.” In Red River (Montréal: John Lovell, 1871), 440–41, J.J. Hargrave wrote that the storm did great damage in Red River, especially to churches. George Young also gave a dramatic account of the storm and added that muddy Winnipeg left him “with a strong tendency to discouragement.” Further, “a locust plague was on all the land,” fields and farms “swept clean,” causing great scarcity of flour and feed, and rising prices (Manitoba Memories, 62–63). Indeed, Elizabeth noted in her diary entry for 4 July 1868: “The grasshoppers have completely destroyed the vegetation around here for some distance.”
The next day after gathering our things together we crossed over the River to Old Fort Garry. Here we were under the necessity of waiting for days for some mode of conveyance, by which we could go northward. The longest delays end sometime. Soon came the call to get ready, and we were not sorry, for two weeks of expectation and experience at a Mrs Gowers farm was not a very pleasant one, although we could almost accept of anything coming off of the Prairies after weeks & weeks of most wonderful experiences there.22

Here we separated from our friends, some to stay at Fort Garry and others to go farther west, and we Egerton & I to go to Rossville mission — near Norway House, Hudson Bay fort. The days spent on the great lakes, rivers, and Prairies were full of adventures & strange experiences.

From Red River to Norway House
On 17 July, Elizabeth wrote in her diary: “We are leaving the Widow Gowers this morning. . . . After a very comfortable stay and rest we can hardly pull up stakes to go, [but] the Lord helping us we will go. At 4 this morning we were up. Arrived at the lower fort about 9:00.” In an entry dated 20 July, she described the subsequent preparations at Lower Fort Garry: “We again commenced packing our things again for the last part of our journey. . . . Mrs Campbell gave me two Buffalo tongues to boil for our journey. Mrs [??] boiled one and [??] ham. She sent for butter and made cakes for us for which we are very thankful for. After dinner we got started with some of our young men from Norway House. They are fine fellows. I promised Mrs Campbell my photograph when convenient.”

So we gladly accepted the call to continue our journey, in one [of the] H.B. Companys Inland boats [a York boat]. It had neither deck, awning, nor cabin. Its crew consisted of eight Indians, one of these men was called our guide whose duty was to act as Steersman.23

22 It appears that Elizabeth had been staying at the farm since 7 July. That day, she wrote in her diary: “Mr Mc Dougal took Georgenia and I to Mrs Gowers for which I was very thankful. . . . They got supper for us. It felt so good to sit upon a chair and yet if it was nothing else but bread and butter and tea we enjoyed it.”

23 The steersman was Thomas Mamanowatum, who, Egerton R. Young later wrote, “was familiarly known as ‘Big Tom’ on account of his almost gigantic size” (By Canoe and
Into this little boat our outfit was thrown & a snug little place was assigned to us in the stern near the guide.

At the lower Fort-Garry, we stopped for mail for the northern H. Bay Co posts, and also supplies for the Indians. Lo & behold to our astonishment a big ox was being consigned to our boat, & unfortunately just near our part of the boat, you may be quite sure we did not appreciate such company. [Elizabeth's diary, 21 July: “Here we sit this morning with a[n] ox in front of us. Pemekin bags.”] However when we reached the end of our journey we were told a nice roast for Christmas would be very acceptable. Here we were for more than ten days with this animal in front of us, through storm sunshine & shadow, through rough sea & smooth sea, and when we were forced to camp on shore, over this animal we had to climb. There was no alternative, submit was our constant theme.

This new start we hoped was & would be the end of our long & joyless “Honey-Moon.” We were starting on a three hundred sixty mile trip of Winnipeg Lake & Jackfish River, & our ship was driven by sails when we had a good wind, and when calm by oars with good strong men at one end of them.

Elizabeth described the outset of their journey in her diary, writing on 24 July: “This morning we were aroused about 3 o’clock, in about 18 minutes we were all on board and scudding along with a favouring breeze. . . . About half past 7 we boiled our kettles for our second breakfast. We past several beautiful islands on the way and instead of our getting off for dinner the boys of our boat set up the little stove on a bag of Pemekan and boiled their kettles. . . . Slept on the boat tonight.” The following day, she wrote: “This morning Egerton came three times and tried to get me up, and succeeded the third telling me that William had a pigeon nearly cooked for me that he had shot early in the morning, got up and got my breakfast then did some Dog-Train, 42). Young paid tribute to his qualities and abilities on this voyage and as a leader at Rossville in On the Indian Trail and Other Stories of Missionary Work Among the Cree and Saulteaux Indians (London: Religious Tract Society, [1897]), 219–30, noting that his name meant “O be joyful.” Keith Goulet (e-mail, 1 March 2013) writes that “minowatam” is to look upon other or something in a positive, cheerful and joyous light. The ma in maminowatam signifies that it is a recurring state and characteristic of such a person.”
baking, remained here till dinner time then started for Pigeon Point. The waves appeared to me very rough, but got to land safely. Egerton took his gun went off shooting, got enough berries for tea tonight and tomorrow night."

We were always glad to go on shore however long it might make our journey. Why? Because of our objectionable company. ["If to go on shore, we had to get up, walk along the sides of the boat, in the meantime carefully walk over the beast, and feel sorry for the poor beast. If we were forced to leave the boat in a rough place a Stalwart Indian would place his back at my disposal and carry me ashore of course I took it in good grace & thanked him.”]²⁴

When it was impossible to proceed on our journey, our Indians would go on a hunting expedition, perhaps find some duck eggs. When fortunate they would come back delighted & at once put them in the pot, eggs & all, the ducks simply minus feathers. Then when the weather was fine they were ready to call, How, How, & off we would go again.²⁵

Now we are nearing the end of July and also our long journey. A few more experiences & we are at Norway House Fort, on the evening of the twenty-ninth of July.

On Sunday, 26 July, in her last diary entry before they reached Norway House, Elizabeth wrote: “It is a very rough morning raining and very windy. William had breakfast ready for us but could not have worship on account of the storm. After dinner it cleared up so we had worship. Everything seems so strange to me. We feel that the Lord is the same to us here as elsewhere he takes care of us here. We are enjoying good health and we are thankful to God for it.”

²⁴ Young, in Indian Life in the Great North-West (Toronto: Musson Book Company, [1899?]), 95, wrote that when the boat got stuck in shallows offshore, “a good-natured, genial Indian, named Soquatum, would quickly jump into the water and, coming round to the side of the boat next to Mrs. Young, would take her on his back, and, holding to his head with her hands and arms, thus she would be safely carried ashore.” This may be the same person as So-qua-a-tum whose conversion Young described on pp. 104–14.

²⁵ Elizabeth misremembered the wake-up call: in By Canoe and Dog-Train, 48, Egerton gave it as koos koos kwa! “Wake up!” Jeffrey Muehlbauer suggests the transcription, koskoskwê! ‘shake! move!’ from the root koskoskw- ‘shake/move’ but adds, “Different than any modern form, also not exactly in the Watkins dictionary either.”

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Settling in at Rossville Mission

The H.B. Officers were good enough to row us over to the mission, & when nearing our destination we heard singing. It was a pleasant greeting although it was not for us, it was praises to God our Heavenly Father [during a service at the church] & we were happy, happy to be at the end of our Long, tedious, tiresome, Venturesome journey. We were rejoiced to at last be in a house, & delighted to see a bed let alone sleep in it, for we had been two months & nineteen days roughing it. Even the Heavens greeted us, that night we had a fearful thunder storm. It shook the house so that the picture over where we slept fell down, we were glad to escape being hurt.

The next day our Predecessor [Charles Stringfellow] & Egerton went out to take a survey of the mission premises, and while [they were] casually walking through a field a bull lowered his head & steered straight for them. Fortunately seeing him in good time they were almost able to escape him, not without getting part of Egerton’s trowsers torn down. So our greetings were out of the ordinary.

The next performance was to assist Mrs Stringfellow to get ready to leave for civilization, as they were to leave for Winnipeg in the boats we came in. The dear little woman asked me to make them cakes for the journey. I was very happy and pleased to do it. That is if I had not forgotten how. “They had been there for ten years without any change and as Mr Stringfellow said, he was glad to go; he would now get some Roast and Yorkshire pudding. They

26 “The Chief Factor was most kind and entertained us to tea, and then piloted us over two & a half miles to what was to be our mission home,” Elizabeth recalled in “The Bride of 1868.” The “Chief Factor” was HBC Chief Trader James Green Stewart, who was in charge of Norway House from 1867 to 1871: C. S. MacKinnon, “Stewart, James Green,” Dictionary of Canadian Biography online. See also Young, By Canoe and Dog-Train, 54–55.

27 The bull was more dangerous than Elizabeth knew. Egerton later wrote a graphic account, which he never published: “Adventure with a Bull at Norway House” (see Part iii, sec. 3). The Stringfellows had served at the Oxford mission from 1857 to 1863 and had been at Norway House for five years. Charles Stringfellow was born about 1832 in England and came to Canada in 1855. Ordained in 1857, he married Ann Taylor in Québec in May of that year immediately before their trip to Oxford. From 1868 to 1896 he served various churches in southern Ontario. Thanks to Anne Lindsay for compiling this information from census and other data.
had had sorrow, lost a dear little child by pulling a tea pot of hot tea over itself, while the mother was ill in bed.28 These troubles are hard to bear where you have friends who sympathise & Drs to Prescribe for you, but when you have to bear all alone it makes quite a difference, as we found out to our sorrow.”]

As soon as we got them off happily, we at once began arranging our things, cleaned up the house and tried to settle our things.29 Our parishners were human beings, glad to see us, & in their peculiar welcome, of course we did not understand their How, How. We kept our Interpreter [Timothy Bear] near us, so as to quite understand them.

The First Cree Visitors
In “The Bride of 1868,” Elizabeth recounted a story about the Youngs’ initial lesson in Cree hospitality:

The first introduction we had to our Indian visitors was an Indian woman coming in, and by her sign language for neither of us knew one word of the language, we knew she wanted something to eat so I went to work and put before her, placed the food on the table as I would before ourselves, and seated her there. She certainly was hungry and when through she said nenaskomooanan [Muehlbauer: ninanaskomonân] which means thank you, & picking up her skirts

28 This child, likely an infant, was not named. A daughter, Sarah Elizabeth, was born 18 February 1866 and baptized 27 May by her father (Norway House baptismal register, no. 1262), and census data also list an older sister, Jane. In The Battle of the Bears: Life in the North Land (Boston: W.A.Wilde, 1907), Young described Mrs. Stringfellow as an “invalid” at the time of her leaving (57).

29 In a short manuscript titled “In the Land of Fur and Frost,” E. Ryerson Young recorded his mother telling him that the Stringfellow had been keeping hens in the upper storey of their house. “E.B.Y. soon had the chickens out of the house and the terribly dirty place cleaned up. Kept the hens outdoors too long — froze to death. ‘Didn’t expect the cold to come down so soon and so severely.’” (In fact, the hens in the attic initially gave way to rabbits, who likewise met an untimely end: see Part III, sec. 16, in relation to Young’s “Unusual Ballad.”) “In the Land of Fur and Frost” consists of eight half-page sheets containing mission recollections typed by E. Ryerson Young on the basis of notes or stories from his mother. JSHB collection.

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she put what was left in the pouch which she had made and backed out so we looked at each other in utter dismay.\textsuperscript{30}

In her memoir, she continued:

We began at once making broths, soups, for the sick, & feeding the hungry. We quickly found out what we were there for. The sick needed medicine. We were glad and happy to do what we could for the poor people in every way we could, and began at once.

Our first Sunday there we were pleased to see the Indians coming in so orderly, and delighted to see the officers & their help from the fort taking their accustomed places in the church. This was Sunday morning. The evening service was wholly the Indian service.

We very soon became acquainted with our duties and what was expected of us. Although we were young and inexperienced, there certainly seemed to be a Guiding hand leading us, directing us, and helping us, getting to understand the ways of the Indians & the H.B. Companys ways.

September 1868: A Brief Separation

Shortly after the Youngs settled in at the Rossville mission, Egerton was called away to Oxford House. Although not in her 1927 memoir, on one of the pages in “The Bride of 1868,” Elizabeth described coping with his absence:

But ere we get unpacked and our things in order, Mr Young has to leave for Oxford mission many miles away ere I know the language or even get acquainted with the Indians. So now the work

\textsuperscript{30} In \textit{By Canoe and Dog-Train}, Egerton R. Young dated this story to the day after the Stringfellows left. Elizabeth had laid out a loaf of bread, corned beef, and vegetables left over from their trip, and “the food . . . was to have been our principal support for two or three days, until our supplies should have arrived.” It was a lesson in Cree etiquette. If a generous host lays out a quantity of food, “the invited guest,” Young observed, “is expected to eat all he can, and then to carry the rest away” (58–59). In a small way, this recalls Cree “eat-all feasts,” at which it was unpropitious and disrespectful not to consume all the food offered. See Jennifer S. H. Brown and Robert Brightman, \textit{The Orders of the Dreamed: George Nelson on Cree and Northern Ojibwa Religion and Myth, 1823} (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1988), 100–101.
of getting ready has to be attended to, but it is summer and not
too taxing as in Winter; this we learn as time goes on, changes of
clothing, & presents for the missionary and guns to secure food as
they go along, of course a supply of ‘tea & sugar,’ flour, the Indian
Guide will be cook and will make what Indians call ‘dough dogs,’
mixed flour & water made flat, like a Beavers tail pressed on a stick
& one end pressed in the ground in front of the fire.

August [actually 8–19 September 1868], my good husband is
on his mission of good will to the Oxford Mission and missionary.
And my work is to look after this mission in his absence. The D[ay]
School,31 the church services, and answer the many and varied
Calls that are constantly made on the mission and now this is the
beginning, and what we pray for most is Wisdom, patience, &
desire to please and win the people of this mission. Squaws with
their Papooses come in without knocking and squat down on the
floor of the Kitchen the most comfortable room in the house, when
rested and gather their thoughts and find out what they came for.
It may be muskuki [Muehlbauer: maskihkiy] medicine, or food, or
clothing. Of course they know they will get a cup of tea & a piece
of Bread; fancy perhaps a half Dozen [women] at the same time.
It is quite a tax on your Larder, especially when you are some
hundreds of miles away from fresh ‘Supplies,’ that come to you
once a year. You try not to think of this when you try to win, try to
make the poor half starved, famished, unkempt creatures happy.
So if we impoverish ourselves to build up the poor creatures. . . .

Soon after Mr Young went away I took ill, was unable to wait
on myself and could not make the old Indian Woman [helping me]
understand what I wanted, there happened to be a Free Trader in
the Village & she went out and found him & brought him with her,
then things were soon made right & I was helped as I prescribed
for myself and was understood, & restored to comfort, peace &

31 The schoolmaster deserted his post, so Egerton found, on returning, that Elizabeth
"had taken the charge in the interim, and succeeded in keeping the children together"
(Young, letter dated 5 October 1868 to Wesleyan Missionary Notices, n.s., no. 2 [February
1869], 31). Peter Badger was the teacher and continued as such till mid-1875; perhaps
he had a temporary dispute or misunderstanding with the newcomers.

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sleep came to my rescue. . . . we soon got things going fire & hot
water was all that was needed. We were thankful. This is only the
beginning of my lonely times. . . . Sometimes the absence would
be greater and the anxiety would be increased as the Winters are
intensely severe. . . . The absence may be three, four or five weeks,
no letters from, nor to the absent one. The Chief Factor Mr Stewart
used to ask me if the glass of the windows were getting thin looking
longing for the absent one. The distance to Oxford 200 Miles. . . .

In such a situation you need courage, Wisdom, patience and
Faith in the Giver of all things. 32

Fortunately, Egerton returned safely on 19 September, a Saturday, and
the week following their reunion was a happy one, marked by good news
from home. Elizabeth’s diary entry for 22 September 1868 — the first since
3 August — reads: “Felt happy all day, worked hard. In the evening Mr Young
went to the Fort to preach, did clean myself all day so while waiting for
Mr Young, read part of the life of Peter Jacobs — 9 ocl[ock] came and no
Mr Y — in a little while I heard voices, and was not disappointed. Mr Stewart
& Mr McTavish brought my darling and with him a Scotch boy to live with us.
I am not to spoil him, that he knows, I hope the good Lord will help me spoil
him thus far that we may be the means of bringing him to Christ.”33 The fol-
lowing day, she wrote: “Patience is my motto today. Today I have been pretty
busy. I am trying every day to live nearer the cross and to lay my all on the alter.
I am afraid I am displeasing my Father in Heaven in laying in the morning.
I hope the Lord will assist me to rise earlier so that I may devote more of my
time to his glory.” And, on 24 September, she added: “I feel truly thankful
this morning that the knews [news] from home are so favourable, and that
dear Ma enjoys good health. God bless her, I feel wonderfully sustained.”34

32 Egerton Young recorded this trip day by day (ucca, Young fonds, series 4, box 10, file
4, “First trip to Oxford Mission, September 1868”), as well as in the letter of 5 October
1868 cited in the preceding note.

33 The book was Journal of the Reverend Peter Jacobs, Indian Wesleyan Missionary,
from Rice Lake to the Hudson’s Bay Territory and Returning . . . with a Brief Account
of His Life (Toronto, 1853). The “Scotch boy” was not mentioned further.

34 It must have been during this period that Elizabeth became pregnant with her first
child, “Eddie,” born 11 June 1869. On letters from home, see Part 111, sec. 4, for excerpts
of letters that Elizabeth received from Clarissa Bingham in 1868–69.
The Chief Factor’s Cariole Ride

We often exchanged visits to & from the Fort, and enjoyed the exchange very much. It was a delightful change & pleasure to have them pop in and see us. Chief Factor [Robert] Hamilton & Mrs Hamilton were delightful friends, and our visits were mutual. 35

The Chief Factors positions were something like the Methodist ministers itinerary, constantly changing. At one time we had Chief Factor Roderick Ross, at another time Chief Factor Fortescue, at another time Chief Factor [James] Stewart. The officers were Mr Alex McTavish, his brother Donald McTavish. 36 These gentlemen were exceedingly kind to us, & made us happy, helping us get acquainted & acclimatized. We appreciated their kindness very much.

On at least one occasion, the kindness of the chief factors — in this case, probably Hamilton’s predecessor, James Stewart — evidently extended to offers of transportation. Elizabeth elsewhere recalled a trip that she and her husband made from the Rossville mission to Norway House, which culminated in a memorable ride back home:

I remember once very distinctly on one short trip to the Fort — we found the Chief Factor very much the worse of liquor. He informed me that he was going to give me a cariole run with his train of half-wolf dogs, & he did. Fortunately I had been told that if ever p[?] are left alone with these special dogs not to speak or they might turn on you. Mission House 2½ miles away — we were not more than half way across when my friend lost his grip on the Cariole (standing on tail end of boards & holding by rope).

35 Robert Hamilton was chief factor at Norway House from 1870 to 1872. The Reverend George Young wrote to Egerton on 10 February 1871 that “Mr Hamilton regards you as a sort of Prince among missionaries” (JSHB collection). Elizabeth passed to descendants a book that Annie Miles Hamilton inscribed to her on 20 July 1872: Isabella Beeton’s Book of Household Management (London, 1872). During this time, Elizabeth recalled in “The Bride of 1868,” “We found out many things that were & would be expected of us.”

36 Roderick Ross served as clerk and then chief trader at Norway House from 1869 to 1875 and later as chief factor. James G. Stewart served at Norway House from 1867 to 1871. Joseph Fortescue was a chief trader in the district in 1870–71 (HBCA biographical sheets); he and the McTavish brothers were not mentioned further in Elizabeth’s memoirs.
So I simply snuggled down under the beaver robes that were most luxurious & kept my mouth closed scarcely breathing, as the dogs knew just where to go when on [the] trail to the Mission House — going there every Sunday taking the officers to the morning service. So when they came to their stopping place, I quickly rolled out of the Cariole & ran into the house, & glad to! Father [Egerton] & other officer in the other dog train — rode up to see that all was right.

The dogs were four beautiful fellows, silver bells arched over backs — blue velvet saddle cloths — embroidered with bead work. Twas the Chief Officer’s special train of dogs, cariole, robes — highly honored *but fearful!*³⁷

“Giving Out Medicines”

Many were the calls, many were the visits, many were the wants, many were the cries of hunger, many were the cries of misery of the Indians. And gradually we became fully acquainted with all the different varieties of ailments.

The men stand around, the women with their Papooses squat around the wall, & chatter amongst themselves, & finally in time ask for what they want. If medicine I have to enquire what is the matter. Oh metuneee akesuee [Muehlbauer: *mitoni âhkosiw,* ‘She/he is very sick’], Very Sick, perhaps they all bound tight around their Stomach from eating some wild berries. So just give them something very simple such as castor oil. When we went from Ontario we took with us a number of bottles of No. Six, very hot.³⁸

³⁷ This account appears on a single page of handwritten text transcribed by E. Ryerson Young from his mother’s recollections (*jshb* collection). The incident is undated, but it most likely occurred while James Stewart was the chief factor. Robert Hamilton, who arrived in 1870, seemed more highly respected and, as noted later in this volume, favoured temperance (at least for Indians).

³⁸ Number Six was the most popular of a series of medicines created by Samuel Thomson, a New England doctor. The concoction was made of one pound of myrrh (a gum resin used also in perfumes and incense), one ounce of capsicum (cayenne, or red pepper) and a gallon of brandy — evidently unbeknownst to the temperance-minded Youngs. John S. Haller, *The People’s Doctors: Samuel Thomson and the American Botanical Movement* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000); thanks to Anne Lindsay for this reference.
Sometimes the men would come in and complain of a bad pain, putting their hands over their stomachs, and I would take a good teaspoon full of No. Six and with sugar & hot water give them to drink. It seemed to just touch the spot & this was often called for. One old Co-cum [Muehlbauer: kohkom ‘your grandmother’ (2nd person prefix)] wished me to keep the tea grounds from every meal, in a dish, and put the dish in a corner so she could help herself every time she came in. An Indian woman came in one day who was expecting any moment wanting some particular thing; she had put up for herself a little wigwam & here by herself was going to take care of herself all alone, that was the forepart of the week & on Sunday she was in the Church to have her Papoose christened. They seem so hardy. They say white women lace [referring to corsets] too much.

Elsewhere, Elizabeth further described some of her early experiences as a mission doctor:

Most fortunately I had a Dr’s book, and as I had daily reference to it, I became very Proficient & able to deal out simple medicines, and perform, such as treating cuts. For instance a big tall Indian [was] cutting wood in yard and caught the axe in the clothes line & it threw the axe on his head and gave him a very nasty gash. The poor man came in to me bleeding terribly & as quick as I could [I] got some warm water, scissors, court plaster.39 I sat him down, cleaned the bleeding then cut the hair away from the sides of the cut, & then strapped the cut, criss-cross, leaving little spaces for the pus to pass out. . . .

A little Indian boy came in one day with a fish bone in his throat, I stood him up turned him partly over & opened his mouth as far as possible & made a hook of my finger and went hunting for the bone & soon got it out — these are some of my medical experiences which were happening very often.

39 Court plaster is a sticking plaster made of linen or silk, spread with an adhesive such as isinglass (oed).
My advice to missionaries going out would be to take a course of lessons in nursing & caring for the sick. Unfortunately I was minus all this, the very thing I needed most. Being the eldest of a large family I had some little idea of some sickness, colds, yes colds, mumps, & all childrens diseases. This of course was a help. And with a good mother’s care & loving attention on all our little wants God [had] blessed us with good Parents for which no children can be too thankful.

So with my good Dr Book of which I made good use of, and the very fact of being kind, attentive to their individual wants following the teachings of our blessed master, we made and gained friends, that were kind and helpful to us when we needed their help. “Cocum Mary Murdoo” was really helpful to me in learning the Language not that she understood English but when I would pronounce the Indian words and made sentences & [if] they were right she would tell me; so in a very short time I could talk Indian & understand the language. It made a great difference to the success of the days work & the pleasure of understanding them at first hand.40

40 “So in less than one year,” Elizabeth wrote to her grandson, Egerton Helme, “I mastered the language well enough to speak, to talk, consult, in fact, to enter into conversation with them and not to be left to their tender mercies again, altogether”: handwritten transcription by E. Ryerson Young from pages labelled “From Mother’s letter to Egerton Helme — August 15, 1927.” Egerton Helme, born in England, was the son of the Youngs’ daughter Lillian. JSHB collection.

“Cocum” Mary Murdo was, according to Egerton, “an old widowed woman” to whom the Youngs “became very much attached.” She shared their York boat trip to Norway House, and Egerton praised her as “bright, clever . . . and a most devout and consistent Christian” (The Battle of the Bears, 55). Her husband, Murdo, a skilled steersman and guide, had drowned in the Hell’s Gates Rapids in the Nelson River. In The Field and the Work: Sketches of Missionary Life in the Far North (Toronto: Methodist Mission Rooms, 1884), 96–97, John Semmens told of the incident in some detail but dated it to 1877, an evident error.
More on the Women
Reminiscences from “The Bride of 1868”

Then too they [the Indian women] are always in the open air, in the Summer in their canoes, hunting for rabbits, fish, and then hunting for fire-wood, busy making moccasins, sometimes bring them to sell. In the Winter, their clothes are very poor, from the ankle to the knee any old cloth to make a legging, wound around and fastened. Some kind of a Jacket & then a Skirt, over all this A Tartan shawel or blanket, sometimes both. And if a papoose it is strapped on a board and with strap attached to the board and made into a loop put the loop around her head and throws the blanket right over the babe, and marches off any distance in the coldest of winter and the little fellow will come out pipping hot. On this board there is a cloth shaped like a shoe & laced up, but ere it is laced up a layer of moss is put on the board then the papoose placed on it & a layer of moss placed on top of the child then it is laced up. This moss is gathered by the women & spread out to dry after picking pieces of sticks & rubbish out, this does in place of clothing. . . .

Our Callers were many, varied in wants, varied in appearance. Some a little Paquasican [Muehlbauer: pahkwësikan], Flour, others medicine, something to eat, one poor old woman with nothing on but a skirt and an old blanket over her Shoulders & it cold winter weather. They often carry their moccasins under their arms until they reach the mission & then they put them on they walk threw Snow & Ice in their bare feet. . . .

It is well if the missionary has plenty of provisions especially tea. It would simply injure our work. To refuse to help them & give them a cup of tea would be disastrous & we might shut the door & lock it. So even if we went without ourselves it would pay us to rob ourselves, some of our friends say do not be so generous. A very old woman comes in seemingly weak and although we do not understand one word, we know perfectly well what she wants and we cannot nor will not refuse her, when you are asked to even

41 For Elizabeth Young’s further remarks on the virtues of moss, see Part iii, sec. 5.
save the tea leaves that are already had been drawn in a dish so she can have it for a drink when she comes in. Sometimes the kitchen is full of callers, and as my dear husband would say, ‘It is the most comfortable place & they enjoy it.’ Then the work must wait, another time. They simply come in without knocking, they think if the[y] knock they are not welcome.\(^{42}\) So let them come, they simply sit squat on the floor, they much prefer that mode for comfort.

The Visit of Tapastanum

Indians that had no permanent home & made the woods their home were called Wood Indians.\(^{43}\) An old Wood Indian [Tapastanum] came into the mission one day, with his squaw & made himself perfectly at home with his exclamations of Ha, Ha, Ho, Ho. Mr Young at once made it his business to entertain him by showing him pictures & taking him right through the mission house.\(^{44}\) We made a cup of tea for him & his wife and now there were more Ha, Ha’s, & Ho Ho’s. He was most gorgeously gotten up. Down the outsides of his leggings were a string of bells, & in front of his breast, a round looking glass, and opposite in the back another.

\(^{42}\) The Youngs left their outer doors unlocked but found need to assert a degree of privacy. Elizabeth was startled one morning by a man who quietly came into the house looking for Egerton and appeared at her bedroom door, reflected in the mirror where she was combing her hair in her nightdress. She shouted, “A-wus-ta-kena! (‘Get out, you!’)” [Muehlbauer: awasita kîna! ‘You, go away!’]. The man told Egerton that the usually gentle Ookemasquao had gotten so cross that “it made him jump.” Egerton explained that it was best to knock at inner doors before entering (Stories from Indian Wigwams and Northern Camp-fires [New York: Eaton and Mains, 1892], 34).

\(^{43}\) “Wood Indians” was a term that Anglophones at Norway House often used for “pagan” Indians who had not settled like those at Rossville — for example, Cree groups around Cross Lake, Split Lake, and the Nelson River.

\(^{44}\) In “The Bride of 1868,” Elizabeth recalled Egerton’s efforts to both entertain and educate Cree visitors: “My husband took many things out for his own pleasure, and made them of much amusement to them, a Kellidoscope, a “magnet” which they called a keche munetoes [great spirits], The Dalby Iron, Picture[s], to interest them.” E. Ryerson Young, in “Scientific Evenings” (see Part ii, chap. 5), described the kaleidoscope with its “tumbling bits of coloured glass” making patterns when the tube was turned, and the big “horse shoe” magnet that pulled needles to it. The “Dalby Iron” has not been explained.
He was most picturesque in his multitude of paraphernalia & his Ho, Ho, Hi Hi, Ha, Ha. It was almost impossible to satisfy him, & almost impossible to get near the point of saying good-bye.45

Very much like the Indian that came, presented two ducks & remained to help us eat them [“and being very much entertained looking at pictures the afternoon passed away & tea time arrived & he enjoyed another meal with us”] & at bed time when asked if he had not better see if his wigwam was where he left it in the morning, he immediately said I am waiting for what you give me for the ducks. Imagine our great surprise, we understood that they were a present. We very quickly gave him all the present was worth and a good deal more. And with it learned our dear bought lesson, never to take a present from an Indian.46 Three hundred and sixty-five days a year were full of such doings, so day in and day out were very much alike.

Queen Victoria’s Picture
In “The Bride of 1868,” Elizabeth wrote that the Rossville people showed much interest in Queen Victoria. Accordingly, Egerton, evidently in the spring of 1869, requisitioned a portrait of the Queen, which would have arrived from England the following summer (1870):

We had not been there long and we heard them speak at times about the Mother Queen often. So Mr Young sent by the Packet


46 In “The Bride of 1868,” Elizabeth quoted Tapastanum as saying, “I am waiting for the present you are giving me for the present I gave you.” As a result of this incident, Elizabeth and Egerton decided to learn how to value “presents,” based on HBC trade prices: “So from the H.B.C.,” she wrote, “we got a tariff price for everything which was the value of a ‘Beaver Skin.’” (The HBC priced each item it sold in terms of the value placed on one “made beaver” pelt, as Elizabeth was trying to explain.) In this way, if they accepted a present, they had an idea of what to give in exchange, since “presents” proved to entail bartering.
that left for England in the next spring, for a Picture of Queen Victoria in her Coronation Robes. It would take a year to go, and the same to come, but it came. So my beloved told the Guide of the boats when he expected the Picture that if he would be very careful in bringing it over fifteen or more Portages he would pay him well. These Portages are great rocky places that the H.B.Co’s boats cannot go around. So the men are to carry their loads over the Portages on their backs, and if they can possibly drag the boat empty around they will do it but if not they will have to drag it across the portage. So our Picture of the Queen, made some journey ere it came to us.”

Fish, More Fish, and Household Help
In a single-page text preserved by her son, Elizabeth recalled how people asked her about the mission diet: “What did you live on [at] Home?” Her answer was: “Fish, Whitefish, Jack fish, Sturgeon, occasionally deer meat, Rabbits, moose meat, very few ducks or geese. As for vegetables, none except watery potatoes.” The Norway House diet did indeed revolve around fish. The dogs — essential to transportation — lived on fish. But people also relied heavily on fish, there being so little else to eat.

In “The Bride of 1868,” she elaborated:

September was coming and as Winter would soon be here in these northern Latitudes, nets had to be prepared for the Fishing that takes place to provide for our Winters need, net mending, net making, occupied the Indians time very much, Fish to the number of three or four thousand were caught and staged [put on high outdoor racks] & hung up frozen for our use and the dogs all through the Winter of eight months. . . .

47 On p. 97 of his 1870 diary, Egerton recorded in theatrical terms the showing of the “splendid framed picture” at Rossville: “Great was the excitement of the Indians to see their ‘Great Mother across the waters.’ There was no peace in the Mission House until every man of them had been permitted to march in and gaze upon that womanly, motherly queenly face. With uncovered heads and glittering eyes they looked upon the picture and then with quiet steps and catlike motion they glided from the room with a grace and reverence that would not[?] have done honor to a St James drawing room reception.”

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Through the summer they [dogs] find for themselves. Mr Young had a few dogs he was very careful of, a St Bernard [Jack: see fig. 5], & a Newfoundland dog Cuffie.48 They were the only dogs allowed in the house, of course there were others that he had special care over. In the Winter time every dog got two fish in the Evening, but before going on a long journey they were fed Extra. In October the Indians with nets went out into the lake and secured some thousands of fish, Stageing for Winter Supply for men, and dogs, women and children. I have often had around my cooking stove fish for Twenty dogs 2 apiece. Throwing them out as they come in from the Stageing, hard frozen. It required some skill to feed some twenty dogs, there was some excitement when two or three trains of dogs were harnessed & Sleds packed up and got ready for a long trip as dogs need feeding by the way. So the sleds are packed to the utmost with fish for dogs, the missionaries Books; presents, for his expectant people, clothing for body & bed, and food.

Fish also provided the topic for another brief reminiscence:

Fish day. Once a month I had the Indian women come in through the cold winter and scale & clean enough fish to do me for a long while. You say, Why? Well the cleaning fish two or three times a day becomes nauseous and tiresome in the extreme, especially when you are compelled to live on this menue day in a[nd] day out.

These women will scale clean & put the fish on a clean board & place them in the fish house, where they will be frozen hard & keep any length of time. It not only helps me, but gives them a little occupation, & in the meantime something to eat, for they are not sent away hungry.

48 See Young, By Canoe and Dog-Train, 94–95. Cuffie (or Cuffy) became Elizabeth’s special sled dog. She and Jack were gifts from Mr. and Mrs. William E. Sanford, of Hamilton, Ontario: see Young, My Dogs in the Northland (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1902), 125–26. For more about Cuffy, see Part 11, chap. 13 (“Dogs”).
Eating fish twenty one times a week, no matter how you perform the cooking. Stuffing & baking, making fish balls with bread crumbs, frying, steaming with milk & egg, Sauce. Even babies & [are] fed on the Soup and are fine healthy rosey cheeked babies.49

In “The Bride of 1868,” Elizabeth also commented on her great need for household assistance, given the living conditions at Rossville and the heavy mission duties that she carried. Finding reliable help, however, was a challenge:

It was hard to keep our Indian made [maid] in the summer; the moment the Ice was cleared away they wanted to fly around in their canoes, but in winter very different, the cold, the snow, & the Wigwam the only place, or with a shawl put around them fly over to the Fort or visit the mission house. The young Indian maidens were scarce. When I had one for a few months and she was able to get a new dress or new shawl, a young Indian would come and plead with the missionary to ask Kitty Cochrane to be his Bride. Mr Young would say to him, ‘go and ask her yourself, or go ask some other Village girl. Why do you want Kitty?’ His answer was, ‘oh Kitty knows how to cook, O-kee-masquaoo [the master’s wife] has taught her.’50 We began to think this was another occupation for us match making, but no, we thought, let them make their own selection . . .

After a while I found the best help was a widow woman [Little Mary, described later], for it was almost impossible to keep a young

49 “Fish day,” which is also the source of the comments at the start of this section, is a one-page text written by Elizabeth and kept by E. Ryerson Young (JSHB collection). On p. 7 of “In the Land of Fur and Frost” (the eight-page typed memoir cited earlier), Elizabeth described the ingenious method by which young children were fed fish broth: “The Indians fed many of their children out of tins that were made for lamps. There was a little spout in which wicks were to be placed that would absorb the oil or grease and the wicks being ignited would give the light required. The wicks would be used in their place but fish soup would be the fuel supplied and the children would suck the wick and be most satisfactorily fed.”

50 Elizabeth also mentioned her epithet in her account of Sandy Harte (see Part 111, sec. 7), there spelled “Okimasquaoo” (Muehlbauer: okimâskwêw, ‘the master’s wife’).
girl as help. I also thought that their wants were many, that I had better have them do some Indian work for me, and then pay them, they would help me & I could do for them, but they not only wanted the materials but wanted food while doing the work. I found I was paying in some instance double. They made moccasins, leggings. There was not much time for resting or reading, looking after the house and waiting on the frequent callers, visitors.

The Annual Requisition for Supplies
From “The Bride of 1868”:

Once a year, and that was about Christmas time we sent our Requisition to England for some things, as the mission at the time belonged to the English wms [Wesleyan Missionary Society], but in our time the Canadians took it over. While under their control we had some very valuable Parcels sent out to the mission most serviceable, & acceptable, and useful. Our Canadian Requisition for Canada was for Flour, Butter, Flour to last a Twelve Month and butter for the year, Sugar.51 Then we had to buy cotton, reels of thread, print the common things we have to send for so as to pay the Indians for work done for us, as money is of no use there. So it means quite an outlay all at once and quite a good deal of thinking, to make it last all the Twelve Months, as we have so many calls that are unexpected. Some are cruel enough to say, ‘Why do you give them, why are you so generous, & so on?’ What is our mission there? But to win them for Christ, to refuse them we would be guilty, & might at once come home. Medicines are among the things required.

51 Elizabeth also recalled that from England the Youngs got coffee beans, sugar in cubes, tea in lead-lined chests, and rice. Coal oil came from Canada. “We never dared send for anything that was not absolutely necessary,” she remembered. One time, though, the Youngs sent in an order “for some tinned goods calling them ‘canned’ goods — the big men at the front thought the missionaries were asking for candies and refused to send them! Missionaries must not have such luxuries” (typed page of memories in E. Ryerson Young’s papers, JSHB collection).
Christmas, a Recent Introduction

Christmas and New Years were a little change from the ordinary routine. We were expected to receive callers & entertain them. It was quite an undertaking to prepare for several hundred Indians more or less, all our Village Indians, all the Fort Indians, and many Wood Indians. [“That meant much for us to learn in preparing & making ready, first what was needed in preparation for Christmas, for it was all new to us, for we were not in Civilization, we were now where there was no Christmas and for New Years, Dog-feasts in the past.”] So we had to be satisfied & make plain buns & have plenty of tea, prepare seats for the callers who were many from far and near.

Now the question was what shall we give them? Our supplies were not very plentiful, and our larder quite bare. We had tea, our boxes of tea came from England, but what about cakes. All I could think of was to set some yeast, make a sponge & let it rise, & then busy myself and make some buns plain as I had no sugar nor shortning to put in, no not even currants or raisins.

Now the day has come we are up early. We get our big kettles on, get in some seats from the Church, tea made, the buns arranged on plates. Now they begin to appear; our first callers were or must have had no breakfast as the plate of buns passed to them. They were about to empty the plate, when we were forced to say, ches-qua [Muehlbauer: cěškwa], that is, stop. If they all emptied every plate, we would not have enough for all, so we were very sorry to have to cry, “be careful.”

This was like the Indian partaking of the first Sacrement. When the wine was all in one goblet, instead of only taking a sip, he drank it all, & the rest had to do without.
The New Year’s Feast

That [holiday] in heathen times [was] a Dog Feast. But ever since missionaries have come it has been changed. It is now a Christian feast. To make this a great success it means much thinking & much work, & a good deal of care and thought for the missionaries wife. For weeks before the Indians were consulted as to how much could they contribute towards the Feast. Some promised a little tea when they came in with their Packs of Fur, some a little sugar, some venison, a little Flour. All this was brought to the missionaries wife. As it was winter and very cold weather, anything that could be frozen could be kept nicely. So about five days before the first of January, some of the Indian women would come in & help me prepare the meat, & make some bread & buns. We might make meat pies if we were fortunate enough to get some shortning of some kind. If only bears greese, we might make rice pudding if we were fortunate to get some milk, & a few plums as the H.B.C. called a coarse raisin. If that was the case, we thought ourselves very fortunate.

Then when the day was near we would get the Indians to fix the tables in the church, and early on the day, although great big white buttons [of frost] were on the heads of the nails, even before we began to bring our kettles of hot water in, and make the tea. As the church was oblong, we made one table across the top & one long one down each side. The top table was for the missionary and the Chiefs. Everything being ready and the Indians gathering, before anything was touched the orders were that all that were feeble & unable to come, they were to be waited on first with some of everything that was prepared. So

52 “Dog Feast” was a simplistic missionary term referring to “pagan” ceremonies at which dogs were sacrificed and consumed (see, for example, the illustration in Young, By Canoe and Dog-Train, 213). On the complex roles of dogs in Cree culture and spirituality, see Robert Brightman, Grateful Prey: Rock Cree Human-Animal Relationships (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 133, 184.

53 Elizabeth added concrete details in “The Bride of 1868”: “a large square stove in the middle of the church was kept hot and the boilers on it for the Tea.” Here she also noted that it was the chief who ordered that food be carried to those who could not attend.
there were several parcels made up & young men were ready to
take the parcels. This was a beautiful thought, and it was carried
out beautifully.

When this was done, the distribution of the Feast began, and
all enjoyed themselves hugely. [“The Blessing asked, all were happy
the Fort people, Christian Indians, & Pagan.”] When this part was
finished, the speeches began. As the time since all this performance
occurred my memory cannot possibly retain accurately what was
said. One thing I can call to memory [is] Big Chief David Rundel.
If he had eaten too much a dose of castor oil would relieve him, and
if he told a lie, the same or a dose of salts, for the time being would
make all right. After the speech making was over, the young men
went out & enjoyed a game of football on the Ice. Now the clearing
up, & cleaning up.

In “The Bride of 1868,” Elizabeth shed further light on the holidays and
their aftermath:

There was much ‘No-nas-koomoo-win-ah’ [nanâskômowina
‘thankings’] which means ‘Thanksgiving,’ and there was much
Thanksgiving in the missionaries heart for the closing of this most
interesting day of the year which is called ‘ooch-me-gou-kesigow’
[ocêmikow-kísikâw? ‘One Is Kissed Day’] which means ‘The Kissing
day,’ as on this day the men claim the right to kiss every woman they
meet.54 The first young man that came to the mission that morning
so surprised me by being as I thought rude by imprinting one on my
cheek. For peace sake I did not struggle or make a fuss, but that was

54 Kissing the women on New Year’s Day was an established fur trade custom, along
with other celebrations less decorous than those at Rossville: see Carolyn Podruchny,
*Making the Voyageur World: Travelers and Traders in the North American Fur Trade*
postmaster at Norway House, 1872–75, wrote a lively account of his first New Year’s
celebrations at Rossville and Norway House in 1873 and his encounter with the custom
of kissing: see David R. Elliott, ed., *Adventures in the West: Henry Halpin, Fur Trader
and Indian Agent* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2008), 64–65. Jeffrey Muehlbauer notes
that the modern Cree term for New Year’s Day is still ocêhtow-kísikâw, ‘Kissing-Each-
Other Day.’

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the last, as well as the first. The thought came to me, it will not hurt me. Then I found out the reason. . . .55

The holidays are over now, it’s hard work keeping the cold out, making ourselves warm and comfortable when the weather is from 30–40 & sometimes 50 below zero. When we have to keep stoking wood in the big box stove at night as well as day, to keep from freezing. The Indians are away hunting trapping they have their wives & families to hunt for rabbits, fish, and find food for themselves, or starve, thus the missionary will help where needed, which is often, more often than not. The days come and go, & at the close of the day the work done seems so little and yet we have been busy. It does seem so unsatisfactory & monotones but every day seems alike. The calls for muskeeke [maskihkiy], medicine, food, Tea, sometimes clothing, even clothing for the dead, a Shirt, socks, so day in and day out, the wants are varied and many. To have refused to help would seem cruel, & unchrist-like, so we did our best & in our souls were satisfied that this was our work.

Smallpox and Measles
In another brief reminiscence, Elizabeth remembered the fear that she and Egerton felt “to hear that that terrible disease, the small-pox, had broken out among the Indians on the great plains of the Saskatchewan.” In her memoir, she likewise recalled an outbreak of the disease:

We were terribly frightened at one time, so much so that we immediately procured some lymph from H.B.C. and began vaccinating those of the Indians who had not been vaccinated.56

55 Young, By Canoe and Dog-Train, 66: “It used to amuse me very much to see thirty or forty Indians, dressed up in their finest apparel, come quietly marching into the Mission House, and gravely kiss Mrs. Young on her cheek.” She would laugh and retort, “See that crowd of women out there in the yard, expecting you to go out and kiss them!”

56 According to the Norway House post journal (HBCA B.154/a/69, fo. 46), 16 September 1870, a boat arriving from Carlton reported smallpox “all over Saskn and in Peace River. 12 deaths in the Fort at Carlton and Indians dying in every direction on the Plains, no provisions.”Lymph here refers to the “middle taken from the cow-pox vesicles, etc., to be used in vaccination” (OED).
We had a busy time & sometimes a very sore time as many were very ill from it. So we had to nurse them & give them medicine. So the mission was more like a hospital than a mission home.

[“Very soon the Mission was full, some were taken very ill, & others not at all. It was now an anxious and an exciting time for the missionary and people. As there was an urgent call from Winnipeg for the Norway House Christians Indians to take or form a brigade of boats, and take the much needed supplies up the mighty Saskatchewan River where they could be reached by those who needed them so that the boatmen need not be exposed in any way of contagion. This was done, but was extremely hard on the Principal man Samuel Papanakis, a Faithful old General. All came home well but Samuel, he was simply worn out, and to the distress of the Missionary & the Mission he passed away” — leaving his widow, Nancy, destitute and badly in need of aid the next winter.”]57

At another time somehow the measles found their way into the mission and the beef that Mr Young brought as treat to the mission family was at once put in the pot, and made into broth, & soup for the sick, that was the pleasure of the mission, to see the sick getting better, from the nourishing food.58

57 The passage in brackets is from a loose page by Elizabeth headed “Memos of my Indian life Sept. 27, [19]28, Small Pox Scare” (JSBH collection), which is also the source of Elizabeth’s comment about the “terrible disease.” The Norway House post journal (HBCA B.154/a/69), 28 March 1871, recorded “carpenters making a coffin for Samuel Papanakis at the mission who died yesterday.” On 22 October 1870, the new lieutenant governor of Manitoba, Adams Archibald, issued an edict forbidding transport of items that could carry infection east of the South Saskatchewan River. Egerton Young recounted how he and Norway House factor Stewart had earlier organized a brigade of twenty York boats to carry much needed supplies to posts on the upper Saskatchewan (By Canoe and Dog-Train, chap. 17).

58 In On the Indian Trail, 150–57, Young told of bringing by dogsled 150 pounds of meat, rice, butter, canned vegetables, and other supplies to Berens River from Winnipeg; most of the food was soon needed for the sick. The mission Indians recovered, but the disease was deadly among the “pagans” beyond the reach of help.
“At another time” refers to the winter of 1874–75, by which point the Youngs had moved to Berens River. In his 1962 reminiscences, E. Ryerson Young recalled his mother’s care of the sick at Berens River:

When the epidemic started mother took as many as she could into the mission house and then turned the church into a hospital, and when more came, the Indians put up a big buffalo skin-tent for her. All she could do was to go around and keep her patients as clean and warm as she could and feed them twice a day. She kept boilers on the stove in the mission house and also on the big stove in the church in which she boiled whatever food she could get the Indians to bring to her — fish, beaver and deer-meat, etc. Indians in villages all around were suffering and dying, and their friends demanded that mother should come and serve them also, but she could not leave those that were already under her care. If they brought their sick to her she would do what she could for them, but she could not leave all these entrusted to her. And her triumph was, she never lost a patient.

The Arrival of Eddie, June 1869

“A Stranger is expected,” Elizabeth recalled in “The Bride of 1868,” “and now we must find things to prepare for the reception which will be a very arduous duty, as all absolute necessaries are hundreds of miles distant and communication almost ‘Nil,’ so we will need much wisdom, patience, perseverance. We send to our English Missionary Society for our needs. ‘But’ we know that the requisition will not come for two years.” Despite these deprivations, however, the Stranger arrived:

June ’69 our dear little baby Boy was born. That was a very serious time almost a sad time. A kind Providence overruled it, & made us masters of the situation. We thank Him ever & always for His Goodness, Kindness, in helping over & through the difficulty. Unforeseen difficulties occurred over which we had no control, causing the trouble. Our baby Boy was the Idol for the moment.
The Indians rang the bell, & put the Flag up, & came to see the little stranger & white faced boy.  

My Indian woman Kitty Doggie who came from the Scotch settlement, the lower Stone Fort, she was a very eccentric and very peculiar old Indian woman, having been more or less in contact with the Scotch & French half-breeds. She became familiar with broken English, & also with their manners. Placed as we were, having no Drs to summon to our aid, we were forced to Dr ourselves & do the best we could. My Dr book was a great help to me, and, at this crisis, it was certainly invaluable, assisting me to prescribe for myself as no Indian woman could do. It was thought at one time both mother & child would pass away; on hearing this, I quickly prescribed for myself, and fortunately in a very short time there was a happy release and new hope, new life, new love, was broadcast, and very soon mother & son were enjoying a new lease of life, and there were many callers, to see, and welcome, the new comer and an Indian name given to him. Sagastaokemow [Muehlbauer: sâkâstêw-okimâw], the sunrise Gentleman.

This was the Indian name for our baby boy, and now without any luxury, or anything but simple fare, yes, very, very plain, fish liquor, rabbit broth. Not being able to nurse him, which I suppose was for want of nourishing food for myself. [“Now increased care,

59 Writing of the event in “The Bride of 1868,” Elizabeth thanked God “for His love and care over both of us through the past months,” adding “and now we are more than happy in each other’s embrace & love. The dear little white Face to feast our eyes upon.” Young baptized his son Egerton Stewart Ryerson Young in November 1869, no. 1456 in the Norway House baptismal register. The naming recognized the friendship and “great kindness” of Chief Factor James Green Stewart, in charge at Norway House at the time, in sharing the post’s “last bag of flour” when the Red River grasshopper plague caused everyone’s supplies to run short (see Young’s letter of 8 June 1869 in Wesleyan Missionary Notices, n.s., no. 4 [August 1869], 60). The name “Stewart” was, however, omitted in later family records.

60 Egerton Young also told of this name, which he spelled “Sagastaokemou” and likewise glossed as “the sunrise gentleman” (Stories from Indian Wigwams and Northern Camp-fires, 36). Keith Goulet (e-mail, 12 June 2013) notes that sagi- [or saki-] is a morpheme meaning “coming out into the open” and wastew signifies “to give off light” — in reference to the sun just beginning to appear. For a baby’s name, he would expect a diminutive ending, -masis: the “little Sunrise Chief”; possibly the name was shortened by English speakers.
now, new thought for food, no cow, no milk, but fish liquor & Rabbit soup. But *soon a cow was found*, and then milk was plentiful.61 It was a varied article not only for our little son but for the head of the family. When winter came I used to freeze it in cakes, and when getting Mr Young’s food box ready for one of his winter trips I was able to give him an extra luxury for his menu. It seems a small thing to think of, but oh a wonderful luxury added to your food out in the Cold, snow.”]

However, he grew, and as it was summer time, we enjoyed the fresh air, dressed accordingly, but as soon as the cold weather and winter came we were forced to remain indoors and made every effort to keep from freezing. . . . Instead of moss I used plenty of flannel, and warm woolens wrapped around and laced up. Thus he was kept warm.62 This was our first & second winter in that cold climate, and of course [we] had very much to learn in many ways, 1st how to keep ourselves warm in the house as well as outside. It needed all our injunuity, to clothe and feed ourselves with our scanty fuel, our limited foods, our much less suitable clothing and it being our second winter, and a tender young baby to care for.

61 Egerton, however, in a letter to the Christian Guardian, 31 March 1873, recalled the challenge of feeding cow’s milk to his infant son in winter: “Liquids, even to coal-oil, still freeze at night as soon as the fires go out. Fancy getting up in the night to give a little babe a drink, and finding the milk frozen solid in the cup, on the table, at the head of your bed.”

62 In “The Bride of 1868,” Elizabeth wrote: “My bonny Sweet Boy had to be dressed any how, any way, as there were no Stores, or any Conveniences for White Babies. So we must adopt the Indian costume when the weather gets very cold. We must hunt up all the Flannel I can lay my hands on. Cut up my clothes and do some knitting. Fortunately I had some Knitting yarn which I made good use of, Knitting little vests, & adopted the Indian plan of a moss bag without the moss. The bag in the Shape of a Shoe laced up to the chin.” Egerton — rebutting John McDougall’s criticisms of his comments in *Stories from Indian Wigwams and Northern Camp-fires* about the difficulty of obtaining supplies at HBC posts — recalled “Mrs. Young, at the beginning of a cold winter, asking one of the officials at Norway House if he would be so kind as to sell her six yards of flannel. His answer was, ‘Can you not possibly manage to do with four?’ and four was all she received.” The Company, even if it had items in quantity, would only “sell a little to us grudgingly.” See Young in John McDougall, *Indian Wigwams and Northern Camp-fires*: A Criticism (Toronto, 1895), 31.

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Little Mary and Eddie

Mary Robinson, known to the family as “Little Mary,” was a pivotal figure in the life of young Eddie, as is amply apparent from his own memoir (Part ii). In “The Bride of 1868,” Elizabeth recalled:

My help and nurse for my boy was a poor hunch backed Widow. She was a wonderful help, her love & care for the wee one was truly marvellous, making his moccasins, sewing for him. She was true and faithful, Kind, thoughtful and true; if [he was] out of sorts would make her bed beside his bed, and up at the least sound, nothing was too much for her to do. This poor woman was cruelly treated by her Indian husband. One hunting season they picked up their few things and went together and when the husband was fortunate in his hunt & shot a deer, he left it where it fell, shouldered his gun and stalked into camp ordered his squaw to go and bring the deer in, and added — Kui-a-peu [Muehlbauer: kwêyâpêw?], that is, hurry. And as she was leaving he threw his tomahawk after her and it struck her backbone lengthwise and the poor woman fell and was injured could not rise. When he saw what he had done he picked up his traps and fled and never was seen again.63 She was taken care of by her friends, who never thought she would live, poor thing, how she suffered for years from the cruel blow, another instance of heathenism & the need of the love of Jesus to subdue these haughty men who think the Gospel of Jesus Christ is only for the Squaws.

And now Mary is my nurse and a truely devoted one to my boy, it is mutual. Now the Indians never correct their children so when boy needed correction Mary would be very much put out & very much hurt and if only putting him in a corner. She could not

63 This story varies from the versions in Egerton R. Young’s Algonquin Indian Tales (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1903), 32–34, and in E. Ryerson Young’s “A Missionary and His Son” (Part ii), which are more detailed and cite unscrupulous traders and alcohol as factors. For Mary’s story in broader context, see Jennifer S.H. Brown, “A Cree Nurse in a Cradle of Methodism: Little Mary and the Egerton R. Young Family at Norway House and Berens River,” in First Days, Fighting Days: Women in Manitoba History, ed. Mary Kinnear (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, University of Regina, 1987), 19–40.

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be found and finally we would find her with arms around the little man cooing some Indian story in his Ear.

Once when so grieved she went away from the house and visited friends until starved and hungry. And Indian-like would come peeking around the dog & cow houses until she saw Eddie, he would go to her, and then come to me pleading for Mary to return. Of course she may come, and Mary would come and begin where she left off. Eddie was the only one who made a fuss, she was glad to come hungry & unkempt.

In her 1927 memoir, Elizabeth continued:
We were so delighted to have little hunch back Mary to help as nurse and care for him. Although she was a poor lame cripple, a more capable person we could not have had. She was so interested in everything that appertained, that belonged to the dear little fellow. She could not do too much for him. If he happened to have a cold or was out of order the least little bit down her bed would be made just beside his. So she could hear and wait on him at once. The dearest little Indian leather moccasins would she made [make] for him, and when needed little leggings, & leather jackets, with Indian silk work [see figs. 2 and 7 for examples of her work]. She was such a good help. We would have brought her to Ontario with us when we came for good, but for fear something might happen to her and we would by her people be blamed and thought careless. We thought it better not to run any risk, & superstition reigned still amongst them. However we kept her long as we remained here, and found her invaluable in many ways, and when the little Boys sister [Lillian] came, while she was fond of her, she did not displace her first love.  

64 Egerton Young, in Hector, My Dog: His Autobiography (Boston: W.A. Wilde, 1905), 184, cited the Cree word “sakehow” (“beloved”) as the term that Eddie used to address Little Mary — one of numerous signs of mutual attachment. Keith Goulet provides the orthography sagiyaw, ‘one who is loved’ (e-mail, 23 March 2013). In his 1962 memoir, “Eddie” wrote that when Lillian was born, “Little Mary felt her carefully all over; then she laid her back in mother’s arms saying, ‘girl very nice but I like boy better.’ Father had some difficulty in making her understand that he could not support a nurse for each child, and if she would take care of the boy she must take care of the little girl too.”

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Winter Travel and the Home Front

New experiences in every direction, in preparing our food, preparing clothing, preparing the missionary for his long and cold journey by making douffle socks, leggings, moccasins, warm under clothing, and shoe pads for the dogs, snow shoes for themselves, and as far as we could make biscuits with plenty of fat in them, and as it was cold weather they would freeze, that is if they could keep them from the dogs. Now they are nearly ready. Two sleds, well packed with plenty of bedding, fish for dogs, change of clothing, kettles to make tea in, tin cups, plates a knife or two, and a few books, and presents for the Indians. Now the goodbyes, as we will not hear from them, it may be for two or three weeks, or longer. The cold is intense, my wonder is how they will really endure it. It was not how should I get along, the mission to look after, the school, the church, the sick. The hungry. The home and my baby boy. Every day brought its work, its care. Its varied duties, & yet out of all the good Lord brought me safely, and my dear husband home safely.

We were delighted to have a cow, so I not only had the luxury of having milk for my baby, but was able also to have milk and if in cold weather could freeze it in cakes so as to add a little comfort for my husbands menu, when on his long cold journeys to the distant Indians. Time went on as usual day in & day out. Sickness, hunger, poverty and want, but somehow you get used to it, going & coming, with the Hymn [“Abide with Me”], “Change & decay in all around I see.” Perhaps, once or twice a year we hear from our loved ones. Then there is great excitement when the mail comes. All work is stopped and everything else for the time being.

65 “Shoe pads for the dogs,” also called “duffle dog shoes,” were dog shoes “of a firmly woven warm woolen cloth called duffle,” of which Young carried “a large stock” on every trip to protect against sharp ice and freezing (Young, My Dogs in the Northland, 191). Young, in Hector, My Dog, 184–85, described Mary’s organizing of women to make a supply of shoes before winter trips.

66 The books were mainly Cree translations, in syllabics, of one of the Gospels and four Epistles. The Reverend Thomas Hurlburt, in his 1857 report from Rossville, stated that three thousand copies of these texts had been printed on the mission’s small printing press, and stitched and bound “by Miss [Charlotte] Adams, the devoted School Teacher” (“Stations and Missionaries, 1857–58,” in 32nd Annual Report, Canada Conference [Methodist], Toronto, 1857, xxix).
Prayer Meetings and Parcels

It was a pleasure to have every Tuesday afternoon a female prayer meeting. It was well attended [“& the Indian women were very pleased. They have nice sweet voices, & prayed faithfully & very much in earnest”]. It would shame some White friends could they hear their Indian friends pray to the No-Tow-we, our Father [Muehlbauer: nohtāwiy, actually, ‘My father’]. If any bundles or parcels came I would immediately sort them out & arrange something for each one, make a cup of tea, and have a social afternoon much, very much to their delight and happiness, their Ho, Hos & Ha, Ha’s.

Not only the cup of tea and perhaps a piece of bread, but the garment of whatever size or shape. The mission packages from the English auxiliary in London [and, later, Ontario] were very useful, as for years they had been sending their parcels to Rossville mission. At this particular time I was fortunate to receive a very useful bundle, so that it was a great pleasure to distribute the articles amongst the poor people, and to make them happy. Jackets, big aprons, under garments, small shawls. [“On these special afternoons I made parcels for each woman.”] If I had not enough to go around, I would have to resort to my own wardrobe, to make sure that none would be disappointed & made unhappy. But at the close of the meeting felt that all were satisfied having had an enjoyable & profitable afternoon.

[“When you see how they live, in tents made of Birch bark, & only large enough to have the very centre of the tent for the fire to keep them warm, to cook their scanty food, & at night to gather around & in their day clothes & a blanket sleep, they have so little, so to teach them cleanliness & thrift is almost impossible. When their husbands kill a deer the women drew the skins, make moccasins & leggings for the men & often when a moose is killed they dress & make the men shirts which are very warm, & most useful.”]

67 As noted in the introduction, the subtleties of Cree challenged the Youngs; the intended inclusive term, ‘our Father,’ would properly be kohtāwinaw (Muehlbauer).

68 See Part III, sec. 10, Young’s letter of October 1873 to the Christian Guardian, expressing his and Elizabeth’s thanks for items sent, and for their warm reception.

69 For more about tanning and sewing, see Part III, sec. 6.
The Arrival of Lillian
In March 1871, during a bitterly cold winter, the Youngs’ second child, Lillian, arrived. Elizabeth made no explicit mention of the event in her 1927 memoir but wrote of it in some detail in “The Bride of 1868”:

March 10, ’71. A Sweet little Girl was given to us. The weather was fiercely cold so cold that we had to put blankets up to the windows to keep mother and child from catching cold. The Chief Factor’s wife [Annie (Mrs. Robert) Hamilton] and Kitty Doggie were with me, and to our surprise the Indian woman announced that the baby’s hip was out of joint. At once she straitened it and bound it up. Of course we were anxious about it, and to know the cause, then I remembered having been standing on a chair that had some nails oozing up and they caught the soul of my shoe and threw me, and I fell and had to crawl to the lounge and lie down and keep quiet as I was all alone in the house. Hence this trouble, but the Indian nurse was equal to the trouble and she pulled the little leg and thigh, and bound them firmly for a little while, so it became firm, but at times weak.70

And now we have a pigeon pair, love. A precious boon, what love, what joy, what care, but joy and love covers a multitude of hardships. The day came for Christening came, and as an Anglican minister was passing through Norway House & Rossville Mission and Chief Factor Hamilton and Mrs Hamilton honored us with their presence we had our darling christened with Mrs Hamilton as Lillians God Mother.71 Egerton Jr & Lillian were great pals, and as Lillian was the Chatter box, they soon made the mission resound

70 Dr. C. Stuart Houston, an expert on developmental dysplasia of the hip, advises that Elizabeth’s fall would not have caused the dislocation of Lillian’s hip nor would a single such treatment have sufficed to correct it (e-mails, January 2013). A study of Caucasian infants with hip instability found that, in fact, “over 88 per cent recover spontaneously in the first two months of life.” C. Stuart Houston and Robert H. Buhr, “Swaddling of Infants in Northern Saskatchewan,” *Musk-Ox* 36 (1988): 13.

71 The Norway House baptismal register, no. 1480, no precise date, gives her full name as Clarissa Maria Lillian, E. R. Young officiating. On the Anglican baptism, a typed note in the Young family files states that “Clara Maria Lillian Young” was baptized on 10 August 1871 by the Reverend Mr. [Robert] Phair, “English Missionary” (JSNB collection). Mrs. Hamilton was a daughter of HBC factor Robert S. Miles and Betsey, daughter of Chief Factor William Sinclair and his Cree wife, Nahoway.
with their melodious Voices. And to[o] they were never timid or fearful of the Indians and would sit down and play with them or eat with them and talk with them, the Indian Language came first and was no trouble [for them] to interpret for us.\textsuperscript{72}

The garments that should have come for her brother, came in time for the dear little Sister, for which we were so thankful, as the cold weather still reigned in climate. The Indians were not as fond of the dear little pinky faced girlie as they were of her brother, but she was the life & fun of all squaws & papooses. She would sit down eat, play, & amuse all with her quaint sayings, talk Indian to the amusement of all everybody, our good old Mary is busy taking care of two busy bees of two lively children. We had a dolls Indian cradle made for her, & an Indian doll put in it to her delight. The doll was put in laced up and carried around, what a happy time dressing & undressing Lily & Eddie were happy playing Indian, talking Indian, taking dollie out for a paddle in the canoe.\textsuperscript{73}

Elizabeth's 1927 memoir continues with recollections of her young children:

The Indians called the little Girls White fish. There was not much respect shown for little girls as for the boys.\textsuperscript{74} Yet callers came to see the little pale face girl, & give her a name & this is her Indian name — Minnie-Ha-Ha (Laughing Water).\textsuperscript{75} The weather was

\textsuperscript{72} As Elizabeth noted elsewhere in "The Bride of 1868," the Youngs took pleasure in the children's learning Cree, and Eddie's language skills were useful and esteemed. In contrast, Jan Hare and Jean Barman note that mission wife Emma Crosby, in British Columbia, was unhappy that her daughters, influenced by the Tsimshian girls under the mission's care, "took on similar dress, and even spoke their language. . . . Uneasy with the girls' increasing influence on her young children, Emma's religiosity reached its limits." On 10 March 1880, Emma wrote to her mother, "The want of associates for the children we begin to feel some, for we cannot allow them to associate with the children of the village." Hare and Barman, \textit{Good Intentions Gone Awry}, 160.

\textsuperscript{73} This vignette pertains to the Berens River years, given that Lillian was less than two and a half on leaving Norway House — although Little Mary probably made the cradle board there.

\textsuperscript{74} Keith Goulet notes that both boys and girls could be named after fish or other animals (e-mail, 23 March 2013), so “whitefish” would not in itself be derogatory.

\textsuperscript{75} See Young, \textit{Stories from Indian Wigwams and Northern Camp-fires}, 36, on the children's names. In 1895, the Reverend John McDougall (son of George), in his \textit{Indian
cold outside, but with much care, & much making fire, we kept comfortably warm, and with God’s blessing we were happy with our dear little baby girl.

While lonely & at times longing for dear ones, to come and relieve the monotony yet we never gave way to disponding. Now time passed away. Our two darlings grew & waxed strong, making the mission ring with their melody. We were thankful for these dear little white-faced cherubs. They were brightness and the joy of loving hearts.

**Special Potatoes**

In the brief set of recollections titled “In the Land of Fur and Frost,” E. Ryerson Young quoted his mother as saying of Norway House, “The potatoes we found there were watery and all but useless. Mr Young had a few potatoes with him, which he planted and after some careful work and protecting the seed, finally gave the Indians a new and valuable supply of food.”

Her memoir and other writings expand on this comment:

> In our unpacking [in August 1868] we found a few special potatoes that Grandpa Young dropped into one of our boxes, and now though late for planting they must be planted. We put them in the last of July, hoping, trusting that they would preserve the seed, as they will have only August, September. Winter in these cold regions comes in early. So they may only have two months.

*Wigwams and Northern Camp-fires*: A Criticism, lambasted Young for presenting “the Sioux name of ‘Menehaha’ as a name given by the Crees when it is in fact a poetical name from Longfellow’s “Hiawatha” (7). Young, in rebuttal, noted that he did not claim that the name was Cree and detailed how Lillian received it. When the HBC held its annual council at Norway House, those who attended knew “many Indian languages” (and some had read “Hiawatha,” even if the Youngs had not): “They gave the lovely child the beautiful name” (17).

76 To this comment in the typescript, E. Ryerson Young added a note in ink: “The ‘Gooderich’ [Goodrich] potato — from Rochester, N.Y. Famous in its day.” On the origin and advantages of the Goodrich potato, developed around 1850, see Craig Allen Lindquist, “Garnet Chili Potatoes,” 25 August 2007, www.vegetablesofinterest.typepad.com/vegetablesofinterest/2007/08/garnet-chili-po.html. Potatoes were grown in quantity at the northern posts and missions, but their quality was poor. On 26 September 1856, for example, the Reverend Robert Brooking wrote from Oxford House, “Good potatoes, here, is merely a relative term. What we call good, here, would only be considered fit for the pigs in Canada” (Wesleyan Missionary Notices, no. 12 [15 May 1857], 188). William Young’s gift to his son, husbanded through Rossville winters, appeared wonderfully successful.

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“Yet they had to go in,” Elizabeth wrote in “The Bride of 1868,”

and as the frost comes fast and hard in this north land, they really only had six weeks when we had to take them up, and they were only like marrow fat peas, but we put them away wrapt up carefully in Cotton wool, and put out of the reach of the frost, as we had to keep a fire in a big box stove overnight, fancy no hard wood, no coal, but with constant refilling we managed to keep warm even if it was soft Poplar.

Yet when spring came and we went to look for our seed potatoes we found them, but shrunk up to very small potatoes, yet not dismayed or discouraged we put them in the Ground, And now they had the whole summer to grow and fill up, and to our astonishment & surprise, when time to take them up, we had quite a big pailful of beautiful potatoes, but alas the verdict, not one could be used, all must be kept for seed. As a Birmingham mayor said, Cruel man not to let you have one, but I did not think so, when we think of the yield and what it did for us in a few years when we were allowed to cut off the seed ends, and use the rest, and oh what a luxury, we did enjoy them. We did not need to mash and peel, but first cook them with their jackets on & what a luxury. Soon we were able to supply the H.B.C. and Indians with our seed potatoes.

Elsewhere in “The Bride of 1868,” Elizabeth wrote, “The Winters were eight months long, so cold that our [first] potatoes were only marbles in size when they were planted, but now to our glad surprise we found several pecks of marvellous potatoes. Of course they were put away, and were planted summer after summer until we could afford to cut off the seed ends and use the rest.” A story told a few pages later recounted how Elizabeth, at one time, saved the seed potatoes from being eaten:

Once in early spring as soon as early frost had gone and the ground was thawed out, my beloved got the Ground ready for potatoo planting & gave the school boys a holiday to come and help plant seed potatoes; now there was great glee & fun. But alas it suddenly came to an end, as they were found eating the inside of the seed
potatoes. My beloved came in his distress; “what shall I do, they are eating the inside of the potatoe and planting the skin.” I at once said, “we will put on some to boil and cook some fish and make them a good meal.” “But where will we seat them?” We put up a board table out of doors. I never can forget how much they enjoyed their meal, and when they wanted to drink up the fish soup they scooped out a potatoe & made a spoon of it; there was no crying for a spoon. “Necessity is the Mother of invention.” So now they went off to their work happy and no more cheating the potatoe crop.

“Still at Norway House”
In autumn of seventy-one [1872], my blessed husband came home to me from District Meeting, at Winnipeg, — prostrated with Typhoid Fever. This was no small trouble. No Dr, no nurse. To our joy if we could have any just then, Wm Memotas, our local Indian Preacher, at one time was an Indian Dr., he offered his services as Dr and nurse. They were speedily accepted, our joy, & sole anxiety now was to do our utmost for the patient, who was a most willing, obedient patient, and the nurse too was all that could be desired, quiet, attentive, day and night, nothing was too much for him to do for his Aumeookemow [Muehlbauer: ayamihêw-okimâw, praying master]. Fortunately the patient responded readily, and to our joy & happiness, was soon on the road to recovery. We had much to be

77 See Egerton R. Young's The Battle of the Bears, chap. 11, for his preserving of special seed potatoes for the Rossville growers.

78 The meeting, which began on 26 July 1872 in Winnipeg, was the first Methodist church conference held in Manitoba. W. Morley Punshon, conference president, and Enoch Wood, then superintendent of missions for the Wesleyan Methodist Church, both attended to meet with and receive reports from all the Wesleyan missionaries in the region (Young, “First Conference in Manitoba,” UCCA, Young fonds, box 2, file 3, Notebook, Berens River [187?], 168–75). For Young’s account of his illness and recovery, see Part iii, sec. 8. The deaths of Elizabeth’s father and brother from typhoid five years earlier meant that she recognized the disease and knew its deadliness.

79 Young, in By Canoe and Dog-Train, wrote of Memotas’s “knowledge of the roots and herbs of his native forests.” Familiar with “some of the simpler medicines of the whites, he was often styled our ‘village doctor’” (180–81).
thankful for. Wm Memotas was one of our most trusted Christian Indians, living what he professed & professed what he lived.80

The Birth of Nellie and the Pitfalls of Hospitality

In 1873 [September 1872], our dear little Nellie was born. Another dear little Girl, bright, healthy, and beautiful.81

While we were at Norway House Dr George Young visited us; also Dr Lachlan Taylor, [and] a Rev Mr Armstrong visited the mission.82 And as Egerton was invited by the Church to visit Ontario and with Mr Crosby give the missionary meeting a helping hand by increasing their funds,83 & as his Brother was on his way to Ontario, we talked it over about my coming with him, when, if I waited to come with Egerton it would be very cold for the children. So we thought it best to get ready & come with Mr Armstrong.

80 To this, Elizabeth added, in a note at top of the page: “The conference sent Rev Mr Semmens out to relieve Egerton.” Indeed, in September 1872, hearing of Young’s illness, the Reverend Morley Punshon arranged for John Semmens to go to Rossville to assist him. Semmens was specially ordained in October and reached Rossville on New Year’s Day 1873 to find Young “in the best of health and spirits.” Young left on his winter travels later that month, leaving the mission in Semmens’s care. Semmens, “Notes on Personal History,” typescript, 12–16, uca, Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario, Winnipeg.

81 Norway House baptismal register, no. 1494, Eleanor Elizabeth, baptized November 1872, aged two months. In Stories from Indian Wigwams and Northern Camp-fires, Young wrote that because she was born in the fall, she received a Cree name meaning “the rustling of the falling leaf” (36), but he did not record the Cree. Keith Goulet suggests it might have been kitoweyastun neepee, ‘the leaf makes a sound as it flies or floats in the air’ (e-mail, 11 March 2013).

82 Elizabeth misremembered here: George Young did not visit the Youngs at Rossville, but rather at Berens River, in December 1874. In June 1873, however, Lachlan Taylor, the general secretary of the Methodist Missionary Society, and Armstrong came from Toronto to Norway House on a tour of the missions in the region, and Egerton escorted them from Rossville to Oxford House and back (George Young, Manitoba Memories, 253–59).

83 The Reverend Thomas Crosby became a mission school teacher and then an itinerant preacher in British Columbia in the 1860s; he was ordained in 1871. His enthusiasm and success brought him to the attention of church leaders, and he was sent on furlough to Ontario to travel with Egerton R. Young raising support for missions. Clarence Bolt, Thomas Crosby and the Tsimshian: Small Shoes for Feet Too Large (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1992), 36. According to Young, together they spoke at eighty-nine missionary meetings from Sarnia to Québec (By Canoe and Dog-Train, 256).
On 2 January 1873, George Young had written privately to Egerton Young: “In regard to Dr. Taylor’s contemplated visit. . . Confidentially — do not fail to let him see some of the “Shades” of a missionaries life — let him rough it. Do not buy and bring out delicacies — if you do he will think it is a specimen of your living & go back & say “the Bro[ther] lives like a Prince” — I want him to see & feel things as you have to see & feel them. I fear you will be generous to a fault in his case. Be wise O Egerton.” Elizabeth’s wish to be generous prevailed, however, as her son recalled in his 1962 memoir:

There came to the Mission field a distinguished minister and lecturer who visited the mission stations at the request of the mission secretary. When mother heard of the coming of such a distinguished man she thought they ought to have something special to give him to eat. So when father was in Winnipeg he bought a few tins of canned peaches. The Rev. Dr. Lachlan Taylor came to Norway House; he not only visited at the mission house but was entertained at the Trading Post by the officers of the H.B.C. They spread before him as a Scotchman, glasses and liquor; he drank all that was set before him. When he came to our house he seemed to enjoy the entertainment that mother had provided, especially the peaches, for he said, “Mrs Young, may I have a second helping of peaches,” and she obliged him. But when he returned to Ontario, he told all and sundry that the Missionaries were living in luxury, that he was served canned peaches.

Taylor’s acceptance of HBC hospitality also drew a reaction from the Rossville people: “After that visit the Indians told father, ‘Your boss can go to the Trading Post and drink liquor with the officers of the company out of glasses, and you won’t let them serve us liquor in tin cups.’”

84 Traveller and HBC man Henry Halpin noted that Taylor also partook of rum found in an old unopened keg at Oxford House “and pronounced it ‘good’ on several occasions” (Elliott, ed., Adventures in the West, 88).
Two Farewells

There was much to be done to get ready, & leave everything in good condition as we were not coming to Norway House again. House to clean, our clothing to pack & leave ready to move to Berens River. We are to leave dear Egerton with Sandy boy [Sandy Harte] to look after things, ere Egerton leaves for good. There is very much to be done. The house to be cleaned, our things for Berens River to be cleaned and packed ready to be moved, Egerton’s things to be left ready for his leaving. We must not forget Sandy boy, for we may never see him again. He will go back to Nelson River to his own people, so he will have much to fix and make ready. Then the children’s things, for a long journey. Three, Egerton, Lillian, & Nellie, not saying anything about myself. Clothing ready & packed, food to be prepared and the last thing to be done was to scald milk & put into jars & bottles seald tight and placed in a cool place, and that is under the stern sheets of the boat. Now [end of July 1873] we are ready & long to be away. Father & Sandy come with us for the first night, and then we say goodbye. Father saying to Nellie, “It will be a long time ere I see you again.” He did not think then that he would never see his darling again.

We were terribly delayed on our journey, head winds and storms, food diminishing, Nellie’s milk getting less and less, each day. The sun pouring down on us, as we had no canopy, or shelter of any kind, from the weather. Nellie began to be poorly & now we were nearing the first part of our journey. Egerton & Lilly were breaking out in spots, from the strong pemmican they were eating. You may imagine my anxiety when this occurred.

Now that we were landed at the Old Fort [Lower Fort Garry], baby Nellie sick. We at once called a Dr, he had to [come] ten

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85 This is Elizabeth’s only reference in these memoirs to Sandy Harte, the Nelson River Cree boy whom the Youngs virtually adopted in 1870 and to whom they and Eddie were strongly attached. See Part III, sec. 7, for detailed accounts of him from her other writings and other sources. See also Part II, esp. chap. 2, and Egerton R. Young, Indian Life in the Great North-West, 9–50.
miles with the mudd up to the hub of the wheels so he could not come in a hurry and this was imperative as the darling was very ill, and when he did arrive nothing could possibly be done. This did not add to our happiness. So the dear passed away from us leaving us depressed, unhappy. All alone amongst strangers, much kindness was shown us by strangers. The Indian men that brought us this far, made the dear loved one's coffin, & here we left our precious darling's body to be buried in the great North West, here we said goodbye to all that was left of our darling. At the same time thankful that the other two were spared, although they too were quite poorly. We left the Lower Fort sad & sorrowful, but thankful for friends although strangers, who were kind helpful & sympathetic. Arch Deacon Cowley, who was sincerely sympathetic and called in a most Brotherly way to help & comfort & give assistance, in any way possible.

Now we got on our way as quickly as we possibly could, as my darling children Eddie & Lillian needed immediate attention as they were poorly. Now we had left poor food, poor attention, poor traveling, for all that was good & helpful which was a happy & welcome change, for we were all tired and exhausted from our long open boat journey, & poor accommodation & poor food, and the loss of our eleven month old little Nellie. A kind overruling Providence raised up kind friends all the way along.

86 Egerton Young used the empty pages of an 1867 diary to make later notes about the family, and there, under April 7, he wrote, “Nellie Elizabeth at Stone Fort died of spinal meningitis” (UCCA, Young fonds, series 2, box 1, file 13). The Red River doctor must have made the diagnosis when he came.

87 Archdeacon Abraham Cowley of the Church Missionary Society (Anglican), who served at St. Peter's Church and mission on the lower Red River, quickly wrote to Egerton, assuring him that Nellie could be buried in the graveyard there. Cowley to Young, 15 September 1873, letter preserved in Young’s scrapbook in the UCCA, Toronto. When Young came to Red River in late September, Cowley conducted a burial service for Nellie in the St. Peter's graveyard (By Canoe and Dog-Train, 255).
Back in Ontario, 1873–74
The children were very different to the civilized children, for many questions were asked about them as their English was very limited. Even when we reached our own dear ones, how they amazed & surprised them in so many very strange ways, in their speaking, in their expressions, especially Eddie. When eating an apple, he said, “I do not like this apple, it has too many fish scales in it.” However, they were very quickly learnt to like many civilized things, fruits, of all kinds and also vegetables, were all strange to them.

We were not in the civilized land [long] ere our little ones had some of the ills of the young children. And as we were home amongst our own people, and knew that it was only for a short time, so we had to make the most of it. Our loved ones were scattered, we had to be busy & make the most of the time allotted to us.

Dear Egerton had to leave us and with Mr Crosby visit the different Towns & cities giving missionary lectures, rousing up the churches to greater zeal for the missionary work. So we were left to visit and see our dear ones as best we could alone.

We left Eddie with his grandma Bingham in Bradford, but we had not gone very far, while at an Aunt Laura Bowels (Brighton, Ont.), Lillian had contracted measles, where & how, was utterly impossible for us to conceive, but the fact was there before us, & there we had to stay. We were most kindly cared for. As they had pigeons, I remember Uncle Bowles very sweetly & kindly killing one for Auntie B. to make some dainty broth for the sick girl. This was at Brighton not far from Trenton where Grandfather Wm Young lived, Egerton’s Father. Our visit home thus was [a] series of enjoyment mingled with all sorts of variations.

88 Eddie described this incident in chapter 7 of his memoir (Part ii). His version was, “I do not like this potato”; he had no experience with apples.

89 See Part iii, sec. 12, for Elizabeth’s second account of her sojourn in Ontario, with some further details.

90 Laura Waldron Bowles (1811–83) was a sister of Egerton’s mother, Amanda Waldron Young (d. 1842) and married to William C. Bowles (Waldron-Young genealogical records, in Wilson Brown, family history files). “Grandma Bingham” was, of course, Elizabeth’s mother, Clarissa.
sometimes glad, sometimes pleasant & agreeable. Whatever happened we tried to feel it was amongst all things make the best of everything, as it had begun so sadly. We tried to make the best of everything as we went along. Our friends were not of the wealthy kind that could give us much luxury, or even attention, so our visit was indeed a work of labour, and a good deal of endurance. At that time there were no homes for returned missionaries on furlow, so we were forced to trott around and visit our loved ones here and there, Trenton, Brighton, Bradford, Bond head.

Mother dear lived in Bradford, sister Lottie, & Brother Joseph, with her. This I made my home, going out from there & coming as the case might be. While there Eddie had the measles. So it was nursing & caring, anxious and trying to recuperate. As for myself, I had had quite a strain traveling alone all the way from the mission, Norway House.

As Egerton went up & down ocean to ocean [actually, not west of Ontario] with Mr Crosby, sometimes they would be on some of our old circuits & then the friends would invite me to join them. This would mean leaving the children or taking them with me. Of course it would be joy to meet Daddy & have a visit with him as well as with the friends. I remember one visit at Mrs W. E. Sanford’s [Sanford’s] in Hamilton. While there the Church presented us with a silver tea & coffee set, it was beautiful. Mr & Mrs Sanford were very kind & helpful to us in many ways, and we fully appreciated all their attention for Mr Sanford [had] sent to Norway House mission our Jack & Cuffy, of which the address on Jack’s collar was inscribed, “A Poor Missionaries Dog. Don’t steal him.”

This was certainly a splendid, thoughtful, and most useful present to the missionary, who fully appreciated the grand pair of dogs, for the mission work, as the journeys were long, cold, & dreary, but were absolutely necessary to be taken to cope with the work. The winters were long, & these two dogs were strong, and

91 Senator William E. Sanford was a leading Methodist businessman in Hamilton. He had given Jack, a St. Bernard, and Cuffy, a Newfoundland, to Egerton, arranging for them to be sent to Norway House. See Young, My Dogs in the Northland, 66, 123.
with other native dogs, were just what was needed to accomplish the many miles of travel over Lakes of Ice & snow, to reach many of the outposts of Indians who were keeping up the Macitonian [Macedonian] cry for a missionary of their own.

From Ontario to Berens River

The time has now arrived for our dear one to return to his mission work as the winter is closing in, and the last boats are soon leaving for Berens River & Norway House means haste as there is much to be attended to, supplies for building the mission House & church at Berens River. That means my being left alone to travel again later on. If ever a woman needed wisdom and a guiding hand, I was that woman while it was joy to see loved ones. It was also sorrow to leave them but duty before pleasure so with a dear boy & girl I started on my way back to work.

I had company: two dogs, two missionaries one old & one young, & a young lady going out as a Teacher, Miss Batty. Sometimes I thought she was Batty, often on leaving the boat for [railway] cars, I was left alone with children, luggage, dogs, and my lady would take pencil & notebook, march and take

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92 Elizabeth misremembered the season: Egerton left Hamilton, Ontario, on 4 March 1874 (see Part iii, sec. 13) "and reached Beren’s River after twenty-three days of continuous travelling" (By Canoe and Dog-Train, 257). He had with him two St. Bernard dogs given to him by a Mrs. Andrew Allan of Montréal; she also gave him two other dogs, which Elizabeth brought with her that summer (My Dogs in the Northland, 195).

93 The ministers were Lewis Warner and a man whose surname was Morrison; Warner was bound for Edmonton to chair the missions in that district. See John Maclean, McDougall of Alberta (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1927), 85. George McDougall reported that by October 1875 Warner was “infirm and desiring to return to Ontario,” although he stayed for that winter (quoted in J. E. Sanderson, The First Century of Methodism in Canada, vol. 2 (Toronto: William Briggs, 1910), 321). According to Sanderson (301–2), the party went by rail and ship, sailing from Sarnia on 11 July 1874. Two Miss Battys came west to teach at Methodist mission schools. The one travelling with Elizabeth was Elisabeth Sarah Batty. Clementina Batty arrived in Winnipeg in June 1875; Egerton Young met her there, and she visited Berens River on her way to teach at Rossville (Sanderson, First Century of Methodism in Canada, vol. 2, 319–20). She married the Reverend Orrin German, missionary at Oxford House, in 1877 (Paul Gibson, descendant, letter to Harcourt Brown, 24 August 1975). On her Rossville teaching, see Part iii, sec. 9.
notes by the way. Of course who needed someone to look after her. However as long as strength & health was given, all went well. How we longed for the end of the journey.

At last we reached Mr Young & Winnipeg, & glad we were to meet and greet our loved one, and proceed on our journey. As the weather was getting very uncomfortably cold, as our mission house & church had to be made liveable for the winter, as also our church to worship in. So haste was the order. And while this was going on, our home was a log and mud hut, when it rained the mud oozed through between the logs. One night it rained so hard and so long that a great lump of mud dropped down on our little girl, if it had fallen on her head it would have killed her, fortunately we were spared that dreadful catastrophe.

Our Carpenter pushed on quickly as he had to leave us by the last boats of the season. Although the mission was not be any means finished yet — we worked hard & made it very comfortable, did some painting, did some unpacking and gradually made our Berens mission quite homelike & habitable. The mission school was passable. The bell tower in good order, so that the Service could be announced on Sunday morning, & our friends Mr & Mrs Ferrier of Montreal were our very kind friends, making the bell, carpenters tools, & many other things a donation to Berens River mission.

Many came to church, & S[unday] School, and also day school. Some of [the] Indians from Norway House were with us, but not as many as expected. Our mission house was one storey and a half high. Three rooms downstairs, the minister's study, the living room, the kitchen & pantry & cupboard, the bedrooms upstairs, quite a palace to the mud hut.

94 Senator James Ferrier, a prominent Montréal businessman, was active in the Methodist Church. Gerald J.J. Tulchinsky, “Ferrier, James,” Dictionary of Canadian Biography online. Figure 14 illustrates another Ferrier gift — to Elizabeth.
“Where Are My Quilts?”
Elizabeth and Egerton Young appeared to agree on almost everything, but E. Ryerson Young, in his 1962 memoir, recalled a poignant scene that left his mother feeling hurt and sad. It probably took place after she joined Egerton at Berens River in the summer of 1874 and unpacked the belongings that she had left at Norway House for transport to their new station:

When mother opened her goods that were brought down from the mission home at Norway House, her heart began to tremble, and she turned to her husband and said, “Where are my quilts?” Father said, “What do you mean, those white blankets? I gave them to the Indians with all the others. We can get a new outfit when we get to Toronto.” Mother’s dismay was almost heart breaking. “You can’t get quilts like that again. Think of my mother trying to take care of her children and keeping boarders so as to have something with which to feed them, and then when all were in bed and still to have her get out her quilting frames and spread out her sheets and sew away with those skilled fingers of hers, and her eyes filled with tears and her heart praying alone for Libby up in the mission field. Those quilts were saturated with her prayers and tears and now you have given them away, those sacred quilts as though they were a bundle of rags.”

It is hard to picture either mother or my father, for he had not the slightest idea of the delicacy and love that women have for the nice things they have made. He never knew in his boyhood what nice bed clothes were, and in his long journey to the mission field he knew nothing of the clothes that love and skill had made. Around the campfire in zero weather all he saw was clothes that kept him warm. It would take a loving and tender heart to try to sympathize with my mother to come through that terrible journey down Lake Winnipeg, the loss and burial of her babe and now to lose the things that she considered almost holy, to be thrust aside by an unthinking and un-understanding heart.

95 Egerton’s term, “white blankets,” indicates that these were “whole cloth quilts,” as opposed to quilts made of different-coloured pieces of fabric pieced together. Their decorative patterns were executed as the maker sewed the two sides of the quilt together — more subtle than crazy-quilt designs — and the “whole cloth” chosen had to be of high quality. Thanks to Anne Lindsay (e-mail, 28 March 2013) for interpreting this description and providing insight.
A Mother’s Crisis
In the early winter of 1874, not long after Elizabeth’s arrival at Berens River, a local Ojibwe mother came to her, desperate for help. Elizabeth vividly recalled the incident in an article she wrote two decades later for The Indian’s Friend:

One day there came to me at our little poplar-log hut, our first home among the Saulteaux, a poor Indian mother. Her tale was most pitiable. Although she had a babe only a few months old, her pagan, tyrannical husband had come into the wigwam with the word that he had shot a deer, and at once ordered her to leave her child and take a couple of carrying straps and go for it. There was nothing for her to do but obey, and so away she hurried, following the back trail of his snowshoes until she found the deer, lying just where he had shot it. It proved to be a very large one, and so she had not only to put one of the straps across her forehead but the other one across her breast in order to be able to carry the heavy animal. After a great effort, she managed to carry the deer home, a distance of two or three miles. When she reached her wigwam her baby was crying bitterly for attention, but her tyrant husband would not allow her to nurse her child until she had skinned the deer and cooked him some of the meat. When she went to nurse her babe, she found that the heavy pressure of the straps had so bruised and injured her breast as to make this impossible.

Terrified, she came to me, the missionary’s wife, for help and sympathy. Fortunately Mr. Young had brought out with a great deal of trouble, the previous summer, a good cow from the Red River settlement and so I had quite a number of large cakes of frozen milk. I dressed her wounded breast and then gave her a tin cup that had a spout at one side over which I drew a soft cloth, telling her how to break off some of the frozen milk with her hatchet and melt and heat it in the cup. I sent her home with this to feed her crying child. Strange as it may appear, she succeeded in raising the child, but she made large demands upon our pile of frozen milk; and happy were we that we had it to give her.96

96 This story appeared in Elizabeth’s “The Transformed Indian Woman,” published in The Indian’s Friend, vol. 10, no. 6 (February 1898), 9–10, and no. 7 (March 1898), 9–10.

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Christmas Anxiety, 1875

Christmas & New years as usual with the Indians. It was up to us with the help of the H.B.C. to make it as pleasant as possible for the natives. But an unexpected thing happened to us. Mr Young had to leave on business accompanied by an H.B. official, and fully expected to return before Christmas. Unfortunately the man went mad with drink & Mr Young hoping against hope he would become sober that they might hasten on their journey, but alas the journey could not be undertaken alone so the good had to wait for the bad, and the poor lone ones had to look, to long, to despair, to wonder what was the trouble. No word, no Telegraphing, day after day, and no word, no sound of the Sleigh bells. Of course the holidays had no merriment for us. It was all too, too, utterly sad, discomforiting, and disconcerting. So this was the way we spent our first [actually, second] Christmas at Berens River. We were an unhappy household, the missionary’s wife sad not knowing whether Mr Young was alive, or if on the way something had happened. Yet hope predominated & kept us from being too utterly prostrated under such severe circumstances. At last Captain McDonald came to himself and became normal, so that after the holidays were all over they made their appearance. We were glad to know that our loved one was quite all right, at good temperance, talk, in favour for prohibition. We were too much agitated to make any comments. Thankfulness was written all over us and everything, and we soon got into the swim of our regular work again, building up the mission & visiting.

97 The man was in fact a free trader, according to HBCA B.16/a/8, Berens River post journal, 16 December 1875: “Mr Young started for White Mudd River and the free-trader McDonald went along with him he goes to Red River.” Young described the trip to Sandy Bar and back in chapter 14 of By Canoe and Dog-Train, though misdating it to 1877.
The Birth of Florence and Other Memories

May came & with it a wee Babie girlie to cheer us, by the name of Florence. Harriet Papanakis was my nurse, Martin her husband was our Interpreter & man of all work. The Ice was so strong that it was quite safe to travel on it, so you can see that in May how cold the weather is, & how careful you have to be in dressing for such severe weather. How we long for food for the inner man, and clothing for the outer man, but the all-Wise and all good God provided for us, in many ways we never dreamt of. My little girlie was now my anxious care to see her properly fed. Fish liquor, Rabbit soup, milk, much of her food without very much sweetening, however the little dear got on beautifully.

In late July 1875, Clementina Batty, a new teacher bound for Norway House, visited the Youngs at Berens River. Having met Egerton in Winnipeg, she travelled north with him in a fleet of five HBC sailboats. At the Youngs’ “neat and comfortable parsonage,” “two dear little children were wild with excitement, ’cause Papa’s come home.” But their mother was not having an easy time: “We found her and her sweet babes subsisting chiefly on sturgeon, with a very limited supply of the poorest flour.”

Witnessing Treaty 5 (and Two Mysterious Deaths)

One morning to my wonder and astonishment, an old Indian by the name of Berens was looking very eagerly at a lamp, the bowl of which was resting on the shoulder of a boy. He was interested, & thought the boy would get tired if kept there too long.

98 The Young family Bible gives her name as Florence Mary Ferrier, born 9 May 1875 and baptized by her father on 15 August 1878 (? last digit not clear). Elizabeth’s memoirs say nothing about the Ojibwe naming ceremony initiated by the local chief, “Souwanas,” which Eddie described in detail. See Jennifer S. H. Brown, “Growing Up Algonquian: A Missionary’s Son in Cree-Ojibwe Country, 1869–1876,” in Papers of the Thirty-Ninth Algonquian Conference, ed. Karl S. Hele and Regna Darnell (London: University of Western Ontario, 2008), 72–93. This section is out of sequence, as the Sandy Bar trip was in December 1875.

99 Martin Papanekis and his wife were Rossville Crees who, along with Tom Mamanowatun, came to help with the Berens River mission. See Young, By Canoe and Dog-Train, 259.

Morning after morning he came and seemed to be wonderfully pleased, interested, and amused.

This “old Indian” (actually not so old) must have been Jacob Berens, born in the early 1830s, who was the first member of his family to become known by the surname Berens. He and his family were Methodists, and at the signing of Treaty 5, on 20 September 1875, the Youngs saw him become the treaty chief for several bands in the area. Elizabeth Young’s memoirs do not mention Treaty 5 or the fact that she and Egerton Young signed it as witnesses. However, a paragraph about the event survives in the papers of E. Ryerson Young (JSHB collection) who evidently typed up his mother’s recollections of it:

Treaty-making. Gala day with the Governor (Morris) from Manitoba! While at Berens River [the] Gov. visited the “Fort” the H.B.C. trading-post and passed the Mission house. Great excitement was caused among the natives and Mission people at the moment. The Missionary was at the Fort. The Indians [were] anxious to fire a salute and wished to use Mr. Young’s gun. Timothy Bear, our Interpreter, tried to fire it as the Governor passed but not being able to work it, appealed to me for help and so where ignorance is bliss it is folly to be wise, I immediately took the gun in my hands feeling sure of doing justice to it and the firing. As I had seen Mr. Young often using it, I succeeded admirably in saluting and welcoming the great man.

In her 1927 memoir, Elizabeth continued her recollections of Berens River:

It was here the old Indian women asked me to leave our tea leaves in a bowl for them when they came, so that they could have a drink of tea. I have known them sometimes, when in the kitchen to actually lift the lids of the Kettles to see what the missionarys wife was cooking.

101 Alexander Morris, *The Treaties of Canada with the Indians* (Toronto: Belfords, Clarke, 1880), 348.)
It was here where our successors had Twins and the thought came to the Indians was, that they would need two nurses. So two appeared & made the request to be made nurses for the two babies. Unfortunately the missionaries wife was not accustomed to Indians, or to luxury. If she had been to the Indians, she might have averted the sad catastrophe that occurred by employing one as nurse & engaging the other to do some work to assist in the care of the babies. But unfortunately she engaged one, and the unhappy one went out saying she won’t need her very long. The Sunday morning while the missionary was preaching he was called into the mission, baby was dying, and in the afternoon the other baby passed away. This was cruel, had they understood the Indian nature this might have been averted. Thus wisdom, common sense, were necessary to avert this uncalled for trouble. We are more than thankful to our Heavenly father for His unspeakable goodness to us.  

Berens River Mission being established — by the Rev E. R. Young, meant much care & anxiety, however with push, pluck, & perseverance much was being accomplished and encouragement was being established & thus work went on. Gradually the House was being made very comfortable with what things we had given to us when we were in Civilization, paints, tools, & everything for our comfort. We needed much of that sort. We worked away for about three years [Elizabeth was there for just under two], & then we returned to civilization & into the regular work.

Comment: Elizabeth Young’s Berens River Experience in Retrospect
A typed page in the papers of E. Ryerson Young records some of Elizabeth’s further memories: “The demands upon us were a little too much to bear. Health gave way. Symptoms were explained and the home physicians ordered us to return for special treatment. It was a heartbreak to give up the work that had meant so much to us; but it was surrendered. Our fine

102 The Youngs evidently heard about this incident some time after they had returned to Ontario. The missionary who lost the twins has not been identified; John Semmens was not married when he served at Berens River in 1876–78. Ojibwe people themselves had concerns and fears about “bad medicine” being used by persons who might take offence at some action and cause harm, even when no offence was intended.
dogs [except for Jack] were taken over by the Rev. John Semmens” (JSHEB collection). Unmentioned is the fact that Elizabeth from February 1876 onward was also pregnant with her next daughter, Grace Amanda, born late that October in Port Perry, Ontario. Including her pregnancy with Florence, born in May 1875, Elizabeth was carrying a child for fifteen of her approximately twenty-two months at Berens River. She also had the care of Eddie, aged five going on seven, who as his own memoirs indicate was a lively child whose supervision must have caused some anxiety, and his younger sister, Lillian. Elizabeth’s health issues were not specified but they, with her pregnancies and family responsibilities, doubtless diminished her stamina.

Other difficulties, as Elizabeth recounted, were the initial housing problems when she, Eddie, and Lillian first arrived, and the fact that the Youngs were founding a new mission. At Rossville, six missionaries and their wives had already worked there for twenty-eight years by the time the Youngs arrived; the Methodist village and its church were in place, with established routines and shared understandings. To assist in the Berens River work, the Youngs brought a few of their Rossville associates (Timothy Bear, Martin Papanekis and family, Little Mary, and Alex Kennedy), but they were all relative strangers to the Berens River people. Egerton did have some prior connections with the Berens family (see Part ii, introduction), but he was often travelling, as when his unexpected absence at Christmastime in 1875 left Elizabeth in such great anxiety. Eddie also recounted an episode in which he and his mother were bullied by a HBC trader who thought that the few ermines Eddie had trapped among his rabbits represented the Youngs dealing in furs with the Indians. Eddie, however, generally had a happier time at Berens than his mother; of all the family, he seemed to form the closest ties with the local Ojibwe, assisted by his facility with the language — though that, too, could cause family tensions, as when he participated in an Ojibwe dance, to his father’s distress (see Part 11, “An Ojibwe Invitation”). Elizabeth kept on with the activities she performed at Rossville, organizing Christmas and New Year’s feasts, and tending the sick (particularly during the measles epidemic that struck in the winter of 1874–75), along with her daily responsibilities. But the comfort that she developed in interacting with the Rossville people seemed not to develop at Berens River.
Leaving Berens River, 1876

Early in the summer of 1876, we left our Berens River mission for home. Our journey was one of real hardship in the H.B.C. sail boat, head winds, Storm, Rain. So we had to go ashore drenched to the skin, and not much to eat, after being out for [a] day, and here we were near the mouth of Red River, but could not reach it, and we were obliged to go ashore and make a fire & try to make ourselves as comfortable as we could in wet blankets. Indians put up the tent for us, and we put our children in the middle and one at the back and the other at the front. But all too anxious to sleep. Ere long we heard the stentorian calls of the Indian Guide, calling How, How, the wind is fair, be quick up & we may reach the mouth of the river ere it changes. So without any breakfast of any kind we got into the boat and fortunately just reached the mouth of the river as the wind changed & glad we were to even have a breakfast on (Catfish); and as we got farther on and closed in we were nearing the home of Mr Sifton, between the upper and lower Fort Garry.

Where they sent the servants down the bank to bring us up to their luxurious home, the trite expression was from Earth to Heaven, really it was a good comparison, for we were wet, cold, & hungry. While there the bath was at our disposal. We were thankful and made good use of it, giving all a good wholesome sponge & put them to bed, how we did bless and thank our Host & Hostess for their great kindness to us and ours while in that terrible condition.

After this it was steam boat, cars [railway], no more sail boats, for which we were more than thankful. The next trouble was our precious baby took disentry [dysentery], from boat to [railway] cars

103 The Manitoba Free Press reported on 12 August 1876 that Young reached Winnipeg “last Tuesday on his way to his new station in Ontario. He and companions were some ten days on the lake between the Mission and the Lower Fort and encountered very heavy weather.” Thanks to Anne Lindsay for this reference.

104 John Wright Sifton was a devout Methodist businessman who, in 1874, received contracts to build a telegraph line and sections of railway in Manitoba. His better-known son was Clifford Sifton, minister of the interior who aggressively fostered immigration to western Canada. See David J. Hall, “Sifton, Sir Clifford,” Dictionary of Canadian Biography online.
it was a constant care, and every place we stopped or changed cars, we tried to get a Dr as the disease was getting worse. It continued until we reached my mother's home in Bradford, Ontario, and there the Dr mastered it and the dear gradually improved.

While on the steamer I caught my foot in a rope ring it throwing me, giving me a sprained ankle. This was exceedingly painful so much so that I was forced to stay on my back for nearly a week and with my boot laced up tight at the end of which I unlaced my boot & found my ankle almost black, but fortunately I was able to walk. However I was thankful and happy at that, for with sick Florence & very much to look after. Anyone travelling will know how [much] there is to look after, with three children and one expected. Poor Florence was not expected to live for some time & not until we reached my home or my mother's home, & called in the Dr, could we check the disease. To say I was nearly worn out is only speaking mildly, very mildly. What with three children & one coming, it was a trying position, but it was coming to civilization & home, and where we could be cared for.

Life in Ontario Parsonages: Port Perry, Colborne, and Bowmanville

Our new home was to be Port Perry. Here we found kind friends, and we were happy, glad, and contented, feeling we were where we would be taken care of. And not depending on ourselves if anything occurred.

Here is where Egerton & Lillian began school work & I was very much annoyed with the boys teasing and calling him Indian names.105

One man simply & emphatically said we do not want a returned missionary, and yet that man was one of our warmest friends. He was just a wee bit of a wagg, so it passed off as fun.

It was here our dear Grace was born bless her, & where dear Granpa Wm Young christened her, but she very strenuosly objected to it for she cried & howelled all through the ceremony.106

105 See Part 11 of this volume, especially the opening sections of E. Ryerson's 1962 memoir, and Brown, “Growing Up Algonquian,” for detailed accounts.

106 Grace Amanda Young was born in Port Perry on 29 October 1876 (Young family Bible). She is pictured in figures 4 and 15.
We enjoyed a musical choir. Father, Mother, & children all belonged to the choir. The father was leader, the mother soprano. The daughter Miss Herrington [not further identified] was organist & soloist — It was delightful to hear her singing. It was a great pleasure joy & delight — such an addition to the church services, and here we had the pleasure of seeing our dear sister Clara married to Mr Aaron Ross’s son, Wm Ross. It is just fifty years ago, now, Clara & Willie have just had their Golden Wedding. We have had the pleasure of being there, & sharing with them the festivities of the occasion.

Mr & Mrs [Aaron] Ross, Sr. were very kind and thoughtful. Mr Brown’s family; Mr Bruce’s family one member of the family who visited the Parsonage very often, who always gave me great pleasure & delight. He since then has become a great and prominent man or I should say Dr.

This is where our son & Daughter first went to school & what a trial it was for him as the school children called him an Indian, & bothered him intensely on that account. Here is where our famous dog Jack caused much excitement at one place near bye, Mr Young was calling & of course [Jack] was along, & was a privileged dog, he stretched himself out in the Hall. The Lady of the house passing through the hall tripped over him several times. At last she said, “how much dog is there?” Jack [fig. 5] was a big St Bernard. This same dog caused much merriment and a good deal of excitement.

In those days there were Gipsys going around, & at that time there were a number living in Port Perry. They had a dog & they said he could whip Jack. Jack was tried, tested, & but for a bite on his shoulder, where he could not touch it, if he could have touched it, he would have healed it, and if he had been with the other dogs, he would have been cured but alas poor Jack was doomed, everything was done for him that love for the grand dog could

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107 Clara and William were married on 18 September 1877 in Port Perry. This statement thus helps to document the time at which Elizabeth was writing this memoir.

108 This is probably a reference to Herbert A. Bruce (b. 1868), who was attending school in Port Perry. He became a medical doctor, had a distinguished career, and was appointed lieutenant governor of Ontario in 1932. See www.scugogheritage.com/misc/pioneers.htm.
think of. So the Gipsies were satisfied, that their dog had whipt good old Jack.

I remember very vividly one night when dear Dr George Young was visiting us & in the night, we were disturbed by Jack’s growling & as [the] Dr was sleeping quite near to the noise, Mr Young, E. R., got up & sternly spoke to Jack. Then Jack was quite [quiet]. But in the morning when we got up and found the Babies carriage gone and also all the clothes that were on the line, so now we were sorry we did not listen to Jacks cry for help, and as the little boy [Eddie] said we never had anything stolen from us when we were in the Indian country, quite a black eye for civilization. Our poor little baby Grace now had to do without her little carriage.

We had much to remember Port Perry by. This is where my sister Clara was married from the Parsonage to M. W. Ross, son of Mr & Mrs Aaron Ross. This is where through Egerton’s instrumentality many were brought into the church who became true devoted members of the church, & great helps by being faithful workers therein.

Colborne was the next place we went to. We followed Dr & Mrs Joseph Locke. The Parsonage was very small. So we requested the officials to provide another one if possible for us. And they very kindly did so, much to our great pleasure and delight. Hear we had a beautiful ring-dove, dear Egerton was so fond of them [it]. We let it fly through the house. We had a dear old lady visiting us who wore caps and when we were at prayers, this beautiful dove would come and nestle in our friend’s cap, and be quite at home there. It was most provocative of laughter and most disconcerting, and quite upset our equalebriam. We came to ourselves soon.

109 Young, describing Jack’s death in My Dogs in the Northland, 123–24, recalled how one of his northern dogs, Rover, had been a “dog doctor,” licking the other dogs’ injuries and making them better. Jack had no Rover here.

110 George Young had left Winnipeg in the summer of 1876 to take charge of the Richmond St. Church in Toronto and became conference president of the Methodist Church in 1877 (Manitoba Memories, 320, 324).
We moved to our new home, we had more room outside as well as inside, much to our delight. We had fruit trees, we had to keep a cow, so we made butter had plenty of milk & cream. Mr Young was told to keep the barn door & gates well locked up, and even the Sacramental Wine secularly fastened up or she would get it. Sure enough one night she did get out of the barn and out through the gate and away she went. It was several days before we got our cow again. One very funny thing occurred & happened. Our son [Eddie] who was at a mischief age, put the wonderful cow to the sled & told his sisters to jump on. They had not gone very far when they were all upset in the snow, and glad were they to get off so easily.

Our Last Two Children and Another Loss

Here is where our baby girl was born on the fourth of February 1880.111 Laura Winnifred Young, bless her, a sweet little miss. My Dr’s name was Gold, he was gold to me. He watched me carefully as there was something in my looks he did not like, for a few days he was most assiduous & very attentive. I had much to be thankful in having such a good Dr.

It was very unfortunate to have to move out before Conference time as the people who owned the place wanted to come in.

While there I had my mother & Sister there some of the time. I had a dear little friend while there, called Mrs Dewey. She was such a comfort & help. She had two nice sons & one daughter, her husband a nice man, but [two lines crossed out] so many ways.

Soon we left Colborne & went to Bowmanville, to a nice church & Parsonage, & nice people. While there I sang in the Choir, & enjoyed it very much. We had a very busy time, we had many Entertainments & many nice young people who were interested & very happy. Mr Young had a young men’s class, & many of the young men went out as missionaries, & ministers, much to our delight.

111 The date is given as 1881 in the Young family Bible, which also records the earlier death of an infant: “Eva at Port Perry 1878. A wee flower too frail for earth’s cold blasts.” Copies of pages in the JSHB collection.
Thus we put our trust in the Lord, & He shall bring it to pass, &
today dear Father’s [name] is revered & honored by those who were
there when we were.

While there we had a little son given to us, soon after he came
the children had the measles & the dear latest arrival took them so
we had quite a Hospital for a time. We soon got around & thankful
to say all well & happy, but our dear little William Joseph was not
to be with us very long. A few short months & we had to part with
him & lay him away, dear little man, & that was while dear Father
was away again.112 It did seem so cruel that I should be alone each
time we had to part with our dear little ones, & yet I was not alone,
O how much have I to be thankful for. For the One who said,
"Lo I am with you unto the End," was with me, throughout — [not]
seen, yet felt, Who’s comfort sustained and comforted in sorrow.
This was in Bowmanville & while there we enjoyed our sojourn
there. Of course we had some rough places to pass over, yet on the
whole we had many friends there & were happy, good meetings,
good choir, [I] being happily one of their number.

112 William Joseph was born on 22 March 1883 and died in October: Young family
Bible. He appears in the family portrait reproduced in figure 4.
Elizabeth Bingham Young: Method in Her Methodism

Elizabeth Bingham was brought up a firm Methodist, and, as noted in the introduction, her father held an important position as a Methodist class leader in Bradford. Although lacking the higher education received by Emma Crosby and a good many other Methodist women of the rising generations, she was well schooled in how Methodism worked at a local, small-town level and in what was expected of its adherents, as the opening lines of her memoir indicate. She recalled a happy girlhood, finding satisfaction and pleasure both in many social amusements and in helping people in need, likely assisting her father in his pastoral rounds. Her memories correspond with Neil Semple’s observation that “Methodism was not a joyless, puritanical retreat from the world. Rather, it was profoundly sociable and convivial, providing a warm, outgoing sense of fellowship.”

There is no sign that Elizabeth taught school before her marriage as Egerton did for a while, although her church activities likely involved Sunday-school teaching, as they did at Rossville. As a girl she probably took

1 Emma Douse obtained a Mistress of Liberal Arts degree at Hamilton Female College and, in 1870, began teaching there in the “academic” stream. Her first meeting with missionary Thomas Crosby, in January 1874, led rapidly to courtship, marriage, and their departure for British Columbia in May of 1874. See Jan Hare and Jean Barman, Good Intentions Gone Awry: Emma Crosby and the Methodist Mission on the Northwest Coast (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006), 5, 11–19. See also Johanna M. Selles, Methodists and Women’s Education in Ontario, 1836–1925 (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996), for broader context.


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music lessons, in the same way that her younger sister Sarah was doing in 1868–69 (see Clarissa Bingham's letters in Part III, sec. 4). Before her marriage, she may also have taught music and singing, for which she evidently had a talent. The Youngs brought a melodeon to Rossville, and her singing was a feature of the church services there. On 11 August 1873, after she had left Rossville, Egerton wrote to her, “When I scolded some of the [HBC] Scotchmen for not coming to church, their answer was that the church seemed so sad and drear without Mrs. Young's sweet strong voice that they felt better at home. So you see even those poor fellows miss you” (see Part III, sec. 11, for the complete letter). Her singing of Cree hymns within and outside church surely assisted her language learning. It was also a means of reaching people, as in the instance of Sandy Harte, the Nelson River boy whom the Youngs took into their home at Rossville. Once settled in and happy, he sometimes would “burst into song,” singing hymns in Cree. (A full account of Sandy is provided in Part III, sec. 7.) Music was her own sphere of activity; records make no mention of Egerton taking initiatives in singing or music. Also, it was Elizabeth who showed interest in Indian dances. In chapter 14 of his memoir, Eddie recalled his mother asking to see an Ojibwe dance at Berens River, and in her own account of Sandy Harte (in Part III, sec. 7) she mentioned asking an old Rossville Cree woman to show her some dance steps.

Elizabeth had other skills that were central to her success at Rossville. The making of clothing was critical and, as she recalled, also involved scrounging for supplies of flannel and sometimes cutting up some of her own garments to recycle the cloth. Egerton's accounts of expenditures in 1868 referred to the purchase of a sewing machine and needles to take to the Northwest. Although Elizabeth must have used the sewing machine at Rosville, her memoir makes no explicit mention of it, and the items made by Little Mary (and perhaps by other Rossville women) that survive in the Royal Ontario Museum's Young collection are all hand sewn.

3 Melodeons were small table-sized reed organs with foot pedals. The Youngs' melodeon resided in their home (see By Canoe and Dog-Train Among the Cree and Salteaux Indians [London: Charles H. Kelly, 1890], 60); it would have been too small for church use.

4 Notes taken by Harcourt Brown, from Egerton's account records now in the Young fonds, UCCA, Toronto.
Elizabeth also made no reference to teaching the Rossville women to sew; they already had skills in that area, particularly in working with leather garments. But she did encourage their sewing, providing them with materials and a warm place to work in her home — and, as she also noted, flour, tea, and soap on request. She may have hoped to encourage their making of craft items that could be sold for their benefit, but such an enterprise proved to demand more outlays of resources (and probably time) than she could afford. In the end, the main producer of sewn goods was Little Mary, making items for the family’s own use. Part III, sec. 6, presents some brief texts by Elizabeth and Egerton on the sewing activities of the Rossville Cree women and the things they made, and several items preserved in the Egerton Ryerson Young collection (ROM 999.133) are illustrated in figs. 1, 2, and 7–13.

Elizabeth’s most demanding responsibilities at Rossville were concerned with food management. Cooking was not new to her, but the need to make do with foods of limited variety and to cope at times with genuine scarcity both among the local Crees and in the Youngs’ own larder posed immense challenges. The Youngs took seriously the Methodist egalitarian ethos of sharing and helping the poor. All who joined Methodist communities were expected to give themselves “wholly to Christ and to one another.” United by “strong spiritual and emotional bonds, they were “substantially brothers and sisters, fathers, mothers, and children, in Christ,” overriding “such temporal divisions as class, race, or nationality.”

Food and food practices were powerful means of enacting this ethos, as well as forms of communication around which mutual understandings had to be built — and rebuilt. Methodists faced considerable cultural dissonance when their closest neighbours were Hudson’s Bay Company personnel, who organized their social relations among themselves and with Aboriginal people on quite different principles (even though the Youngs at Rossville came to be on good terms with some HBC officers). Elizabeth and Egerton were bemused by HBC ranking and gender distinctions when they arrived at Lower Fort Garry on the Red River in July 1868. The “law of precedents” prevailed: at dinner, “no clerk of fourteen years’ standing would think of entering before one who had been fifteen years in the service, or of sitting

5 Semple, The Lord’s Dominion, 58.
above him at the table.” Another custom that stirred their comment “was the fact that there were two dining-rooms . . . one for the ladies, and the other for the gentlemen of the service.” The Youngs found this “so contrary to all our ideas and education on the subject” that “we presumed to question it,” but they were told it was an old custom that worked well and that if business were discussed in the women’s presence, “all our schemes and plans would soon be known to all.”

Elizabeth Vibert has looked more broadly at how HBC food practices embodied British colonial outlooks, providing “a ready means to shore up social boundaries.” In the 1820s, the company laid down rules to limit social and racial mixing at meals. Gentlemen officers tended to get the best foods — fresh meat and vegetables; the lower ranks got fish, flour, or whatever country produce was at hand, and Aboriginal people were not at table at all — except insofar as some employees were of Aboriginal descent. As Vibert observes, “The daily rituals of the table provided a key venue for the performance and reproduction of class and racial status. . . . It was all part of the constant theatre of the fur trade, a set of self-conscious performances that extended beyond food to dress, personal conduct, and cross-cultural ceremony” — all manifest in “the allocation of food, the tradition of high table, the arrangement of chairs around tables, the exclusion of women.” In short, “the rituals of everyday life both symbolized and enabled the hierarchical class, race, and gender relations that structured fur trade society.”

At Rossville, the Youngs enacted their own Methodist set of performances around food, blending their values with those of the Crees as they began to understand them. Having already experienced HBC practices, they faced a new learning curve as their Cree hosts sounded out their values and responses. Their first visitor, whom they both wrote about, was the woman who gladly ate what Elizabeth set before her and then carried off the entire loaf of bread, corned beef, and dish of vegetables sitting on the table. Egerton later came to understand the etiquette behind her taking everything that she

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6 Young, By Canoe and Dog-Train, 44.
believed was being given. But the woman also doubtless perceived the newcomers as well endowed with both goods and status, and hence as obliged to be generous; Mary Black-Rogers’s classic article, “Varieties of ‘Starving,’” is of help in interpreting the episode. Elizabeth learned to set out in future only what she could afford to give.

Their second lesson came from the man who presented two ducks as a “present” to the missionary. After he lingered much of the day, he finally made the Youngs understand that he was awaiting the “present” they were to give him in exchange. Evidently, he conceptualized their acceptance of the ducks as initiating an exchange of the sort he might have expected over at the HBC post and, in Cree terms, a reciprocal relationship. To avoid such situations in the future, the Youngs took an economic approach, deciding to be very careful about “gifts” and to pay (based on HBC trade standards) “a reasonable price for everything we needed which they had to sell.” In the absence of a cash economy, this entailed calculating what they really needed and what they could spare from the supplies they received only a couple of times a year.

As the Youngs settled in, Elizabeth’s food practices and offerings were central to the building and maintaining of relationships. Her collaborative organizing of the New Year’s feasts and the invitations to all, from HBC traders to “pagans” coming from some distance, were striking examples. The Rossville spirit of inclusiveness extended to the sending of food from the feast to all those who could not attend because of age or sickness, and afterwards all the remaining food was divided among those in need. From a Cree perspective, the event would have evoked parallels with the custom

9 Young, By Canoe and Dog-Train, 60. Timothy Bear early began to assist as interpreter, but it is unclear whether he was on hand in this episode.
10 Young, By Canoe and Dog-Train, 68–70; see also Elizabeth’s account in her memoir (“The New Year’s Feast”), above. Methodist organizing of such feasts was not new. On 1 January 1856, for example, the Reverend Robert Brooking described a New Year’s feast to which the Indians contributed beavers, rabbits, and venison (Wesleyan Missionary Notices, no. 12 [15 May 1857], 180). But the scale and inclusiveness of the Rossville event described by Elizabeth were remarkable.
of the eat-all feast or “wihkotowin, a feast of game at which a large surplus is prepared and entirely consumed.” In anthropological terms, the feast was a grand example of commensality, the act of eating at the same table, as an expression of social solidarity or bonding. The Methodists saw the feast in that light, as a positive expression of their values, but their writers also portrayed it to Christian audiences as a replacement for the “dog feast” — their simplified rendition of Cree-Ojibwe ceremonies that epitomized the paganism that the missionaries sought to wipe out as they brought everyone together in new observances (which the Cree could relate to as offering some parallels to the old).

Elizabeth’s memoirs reveal many examples of the role of food as symbol and vehicle for setting relationships in motion, but Egerton in his writings described some of her food “performances” and hospitality in more detail than she did. On the first Sunday after the Youngs’ arrival, for example, a venerable old man, “one of the first converts of the early Missionaries,” said to have been a hunter for the HBC for eighty years, arrived from some distance for the morning service. The Youngs invited him home to dine and to rest so that he could stay for the afternoon service, and his visits became a pattern each Sunday. William Papanekis became a close friend and a class leader, and his three sons were important in the Youngs’ Rossville life: Samuel as the leader of the smallpox relief expedition in 1870, Martin as Egerton’s trusted guide in summer and winter and later as aide to the Berens River mission, and Edward, converted by Egerton and ordained in Winnie in 1889.

Then one June, perhaps in 1869, a visiting stranger told Egerton about meeting the Reverend James Evans as a boy back in the 1840s. As he was


12 Young’s By Canoe and Dog-Train, 66, and illustration, 212, joined other published mission works in dramatizing the contrasts between old pagan rites and new observances.

13 Young, By Canoe and Dog-Train, 130–32. The first Methodist missionary to conduct baptisms at Norway House, Robert Rundle, baptized five children of William and Ann Papanekis in July 1840: Norway House baptismal register, nos. 49 and 55–58, including Samuel, aged twelve, and Martin, aged six.
an orphan, Evans had taken him into his home and was very kind to him, explaining to him about the Christian faith. However, a Cree family trading at Norway House from a great distance persuaded him to come live with them, with unhappy results. He grew up far away and had a family. Years later, after a terrible winter hunt, a voice spoke to him urging him to remember the missionary’s message, and then game animals became plentiful again. Now he had arrived with his wife and children, “to ask you to help us to become Christians.” Egerton recorded that when Elizabeth heard the story, she rose to the occasion: “Out of our scant supplies we gave the whole family a good hearty meal, and we both did what we could by words and actions to make them feel that they were our friends.” Some older residents remembered the orphan and his parents and pitched in to give the family a home.16

Another initiative, organized mainly by Elizabeth, was a striking kind of Methodist (midday) dinner theatre. As Egerton wrote in By Canoe and Dog-Train, this “novel plan” involved the Youngs visiting individual families for a prearranged meal to encourage wives to keep their homes “decently and in good order.” Egerton would announce at the Sunday service that, on following days, he and Elizabeth would come to certain homes for a meal and that they would see to the accoutrements and bring provisions as needed, if the family would prepare their home for the visit. In mid-morning, Elizabeth would get her dog-train harnessed and her cari-ole loaded with dishes, knives and forks, tablecloth and provisions, and have her young dog-driver, Alex Kennedy, drive her to the home. (Egerton recalled elsewhere that, “My wife was also the owner of a capital [dog] train, that was generally kept well employed, under the charge of an efficient driver, in taking her around, as, on her missions of comfort and helpful-ness, she visited the wigwams and other lowly homes of the Indians, where sickness prevailed.”)15

14 Young, By Canoe and Dog-Train, 151–57.
15 Young, My Dogs in the Northland (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1902), 68. I. O. the Indian Trail and Other Stories of Missionary Work Among the Cree and Saulteaux Indians (London: Religious Tract Society, [1897]), 49–50, Young identified Kennedy as Elizabeth’s dog driver, adding that “[we] each had our favourite dog-trains.” Cuffy, the Newfoundland, was the lead dog in Elizabeth’s train. For more on Alex Kennedy, see Part III, sec. 15.
Elizabeth and the woman of the house would then prepare the meal and spread the dishes and cutlery on the tablecloth, usually arranged on the floor, as tables were few. Egerton would arrive about noon, and all would enjoy a plain feast, commonly fish and potatoes, and “cheery conversation” with the family, followed by prayer and hymn singing. Egerton would then leave on his various duties while Elizabeth helped in cleaning up and in any other matters, such as clothing, with which assistance was wanted. The aim was to set an example, to provide a model for good Methodist housekeeping, while also fostering sociability and commensality — the notion of fellow worshippers sharing meals as equals. Egerton sometimes extrapolated from these dinners in his preaching: “Better far is it when Jesus comes. He spreads out the feast, and he invites us to sit down and feast with Him. O let Him in!”

Food sociability and sharing, cultivated by Elizabeth and often by Egerton as well, brought more families to Rossville and into the congregation. The difficulty with their mission success was the fact that the larger economic landscape was being reconfigured as Hudson’s Bay Company business practices shifted. The resources of the area were also under severe strain. Big game was getting scarce, and rabbits were a limited substitute. Fish was the mainstay for both people and dogs; the Youngs wrote several times about eating fish twenty-one times a week. Their son in his memoirs (see Part II, chapters 2 and 6) recalled his parents’ concern about food shortages and the depletion of fish, and agriculture was scarcely viable in the Norway House environment, even as Egerton’s new variety of potatoes proved highly successful and as plowing with dogs aided in their planting. Food concerns were major factors in Egerton’s urging the church to establish a mission at Berens River as a new home for at least a portion of the Rossville

16 Young, By Canoe and Dog-Train, 229–32. This evokes Jesus’s words in Revelation 3:20: “If any man hear my voice and open the door I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with me.” On a more mundane scale, tea served the purpose of commensality well enough; in Stories from Indian Wigwams and Northern Camp-fires (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1892), 38, Egerton wrote that “even old Tapastanum, the conjurer, became friendly and frequently called to have a talk over a cup of tea.” In By Canoe and Dog-Train, 234–38, Egerton told another story of sharing and its results. He and seven Cree associates ran out of food on a trip from Oxford House. One man caught a pike, and, when cooked, a third of it was given to the “praying master.” Egerton insisted that it be evenly divided among them all, a gesture that later influenced some of them, so they said, to be “fully decided for Christ.”

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people; he was to be disappointed that so few of them followed him there after his own relocation in 1874. Governmental authorities directed them instead to Sandy Bar and White Mud River, whereupon they were relocated to a reserve on the Fisher River to make way for incoming Icelandic settlers.  

One story that Egerton told in a letter evidently addressed to the Christian Guardian and written on 31 March 1873, a few months before the Youngs left Rossville, expressed the strain on everyone’s food resources and the compulsion felt to share whatever one could:

One morning . . . after making a few visits among the people, as I was putting up a little flour for a poor, sick woman, my good wife said, “My dear, that is the last bag of flour, and there are several months yet before boats can arrive with more.” My answer was, “Wrap yourself up and go and see her sufferings for yourself.” She did so, and returned home about dinner time. When the table was set, and grace said, after Mrs. Young had received her portion, she put it all in a little pail, and sent it to the poor, sick woman, and while our little ones and I were trying to eat our dinner, there came to our ears the wailing, importunate prayer, “Oh Lord, pity the poor.” The little three-year-old boy looks up and says, “Papa, is God cross with us, that mamma cries so when she prays?” It is not the first time that food has gone from our table, and we have combined fasting with our prayers for our poor Indians.  

Egerton in this letter did not mention another factor pressing on the family’s resources: the Youngs’ taking of Little Mary and Sandy Harte into their household on a lasting basis. Mary and Sandy were not simply charity cases; they made real contributions to the household and became warmly attached to the Youngs. But their previous injuries had also left them with physical disabilities such that the Youngs’ support was important to their well-being.


18 Copy of printed letter preserved in Egerton R. Young’s scrapbook, ucca, Young fonds, Toronto. The letter lacks documentation, but it opens with a reference to receiving the latest issue of the Christian Guardian.

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As of 1873, when Young wrote, he and Elizabeth could only partially grasp the scope of the HBC-related changes beginning to affect the Cree around Norway House. For decades, Norway House had been the key axis of transport and communication from England to York Factory to Lake Winnipeg and beyond, but as rail and steamship transport began to reach areas to the south, York Factory was losing importance, with implications for both Norway and Oxford houses. The need for York boats and boatmen was declining, and the Hudson’s Bay Company shifted its investments and interest away from the old labour-intensive modes of travel.19 By 28 September 1875, the Reverend John Ruttan was writing from Rossville of the pressing needs “of our people who are now thrown out of employment without any means whereby to procure the necessary things for themselves and families.”20 Given that the missionaries were generally on short rations themselves, Methodist generosity and sharing could not resolve the larger problems that were arising. The Youngs, as they later realized, were living through the end of an era.

Mission Wives at Rossville: Some Comparisons

How do we situate Elizabeth Young among missionary wives of her time, and, indeed, can we generalize about them? Rosemary Gagan was able to gather considerable data about the single women who worked for the Women’s Missionary Society of the Methodist Church of Canada in the years from 1881 to 1925 because these women had some visibility and left biographical and career records, even if their careers were short.21 In contrast, the lives and identities of mission wives were largely submerged in those of their husbands; it takes some detective work even to find out their

19 See Tough, “As Their Natural Resources Fail,” figures 2.4 and 2.5, comparing the HBC transport system of York boat brigades in 1868 with the rise of rail lines and of steam transport on Lake Winnipeg, in 1875–85.

20 Ruttan, 28 September 1875, to Wesleyan Missionary Notices, 1875, 87.

first names. It is unusual to come across such extensive memoirs such as Elizabeth left or to have available such a large family correspondence as Emma Crosby’s from British Columbia. Most wives left few or no personal writings that have found their way into archives or into print.

Various sources, however, offer glimpses of the mission wives who lived and served at Rossville before and after Elizabeth, which provide the basis for some comparisons. In the late summer of 1840, James and Mary Evans (who had married in 1822) and their daughter, Eugenia Clarissa, aged about seventeen, settled at Norway House. Their relations with the company and Donald Ross, the HBC officer in charge, began well but soon deteriorated. By summer 1843, the Methodists could not remain comfortably in the post and began building mission accommodations beside a small Cree village about two miles distant. Ross wrote to his colleague, James Hargrave at York Factory, on 2 December 1843, “our pious neighbours removed down to their new Establishment at the village in the latter end of November the old Lady is quite savage, about what she calls being ‘turned out of the Fort’ — never mind, let her grumble . . . I only wish they were ‘on their own hook’” (referring to HBC outlays for transport and other services contributed to the mission).

Egerton Young, in his biography of James Evans, naturally viewed Mary Evans very differently. Perhaps recalling some qualities that he saw in his own wife, he cited Mary as one of “the many noble brave women” whose “coolness and bravery in trying hours quite equals that of the men. Their tact and skill, their patience and endurance, their faith and belief in the ultimate triumph of the gospel, easily place them in the front.” His hagiography, however, had some basis in concrete knowledge of the Evanses gained through oral history. After James Evans’s death in England in 1846, Mary returned to Canada, and Egerton recalled a time “when, as a little boy in my father’s parsonage,” he sat at her feet and “listened with intensest interest” as she talked of the Rossville mission and of its people such as John Oig and other

22 See Hare and Barman, Good Intentions Gone Awry.
23 G. P. de T. Glazebrook, ed., The Hargrave Correspondence, 1821-1843 (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1938), 460. Hargrave’s wife, Letitia, wrote in the same period of growing friction between Mary and Mrs. Ross. Yet Donald Ross was recognized in the naming of the new mission village as “Rossville.”
Evans associates whom he was later to meet and who also shared their memories with him. Mary Evans initiated prayer meetings and Bible readings for the mission women; she also encouraged the women’s “wonderful cleverness . . . in their bead work, and silk and porcupine quill work,” and the Evanses sent for “quantities of flax and wool and spinning wheels, as well as yarn and thread” to foster their industry. (Elizabeth was to carry on some of the same activities twenty-five years later, although she never mentioned spinning.) The women, he said, also gathered and selected the white birch bark used in printing Evans’s first syllabic texts and then stitched the pages together with deerskin covers. Another task of the women, surely organized by Mary Evans (although this is not explicitly mentioned), was the making of duffle dog shoes; James Evans used many of them on his long trips, as did Egerton in later times.24 Indications are that Mary established a round of activities that later mission wives at Rossville would replicate to varying degrees. The details of her practical work are not well recorded, however, and the Evanses’ Rossville legacy was darkened by their difficulties with the Company and by the turmoil surrounding accusations of Evans’s improper behaviour with young girls and his falling out with his younger associate, the Reverend William Mason.25

The next missionary wife, Sophia Mason, lived at Rossville almost twice as long as any other. She had a signal advantage over the others: she was fluent in Cree and at home in the region. Born in 1822 in Red River, she was the youngest daughter of HBC governor Thomas Thomas and his Cree wife, Sarah. After her father’s death in 1828, she resided in two successive Red River Anglican clergymen’s homes and completed her studies at the Red River Academy. In 1843, she married the Reverend William Mason, and later that year the couple arrived at Norway House to assist with the mission. They stayed on when Evans left in 1846, and Sophia took up scriptural translating, building on and refining the work being done by Henry Bird Steinhauer and John Sinclair. The Bible translations that resulted bore William Mason’s name, but Mason recognized that her “perfect command and knowledge

of the Indian language” was central to “the most correct rendering” of any passage in Cree. He credited also her labours at the mission day school and her “visits to the Indian tents” while also tending to a large family despite “her feeble and delicate constitution.” Sophia had four children baptized at Rossville in 1844, 1846, 1848, and 1850. The last two, although listed in the Norway House Wesleyan baptismal register, were baptized by Anglican clergy, a clue to Mason’s coming move to a new connection.26

In 1854, William Mason left Rossville and engaged to serve the Church of England, spending the next four years at York Factory. The Masons then sailed to England to see the Cree translations printed while Sophia worked on completing revisions to the Cree Old Testament. She died in London in October 1861, shortly before her fortieth birthday and three months after the birth of her ninth child.27 Her Cree language skills and translation work set her apart from any other wife. She exceeded most of the others in another respect: she was pregnant during much of her mission service, bearing nine children in a marriage that lasted only eighteen years. Unfortunately, Egerton Young’s writings say nothing about Sophia, given the deep rifts that developed between Evans and Mason and between Mason and the Methodists. In his biography of Evans, Young wrote, “We do not put his [Mason’s] name here on our pages.”28

In the summer of 1854, the Reverend Thomas Hurlburt and his wife, Betsy, arrived to take charge of Rossville. Hurlburt, in his mid-forties, was appointed to chair the Hudson’s Bay District missions. He had married Betsy Almira Adams in 1832, and the two had served at numbers of eastern missions and for seven years in the Mississippi-Missouri region. He was known for his mastery of several Native languages and for his Cree and Ojibwe translations. Betsy had one child baptized at Rossville, on

26 Norway House baptismal register, no. 423, Sarah Jane, born 21 August 1844; no. 581, Mary Ross, born June 1846; no. 658, Charles Edwin, born June 1848 and baptized by the Reverend John Smithurst of Red River; and no. 715, Frederick William, born March 1850 and baptized by the Bishop of Rupert’s Land. Possibly another child or two were born at Rossville after 1850 but recorded in Anglican registers.

27 Bruce Peel, “Thomas, Sophia (Mason).” Dictionary of Canadian Biography online.

28 Young, Apostle of the North, 195–96. The fact that Mason’s name appeared alone on the Cree translations published in England also much irritated all who knew how hard the native Cree-speakers had worked on them.

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23 September 1855.  

Hurlburt cited her contributions in visiting the sick and holding “female prayer meetings.” But her poor health caused her to leave for Canada; in May of 1856, Hurlburt took her as far as St. Paul and returned to spend one more year at Rossville. The mission had an important female helper, however. Miss Charlotte Adams, a cousin of Betsy, had come west with the Hurlburts to serve as a “devoted school teacher,” who “spent her evenings in the training of the mothers and daughters in household duties, and in visiting the sick and needy in their homes,” while also studying the Cree language and gathering girls to stitch and bind three thousand copies of one of the gospels and four epistles, all written in Cree syllabics, for circulation in the region. Hurlburt described her other contributions: “With the girls and women, Miss Adams is very acceptable; and they now crochet a variety of fancy and useful articles for themselves, and also some to sell... Hoods, caps and bonnets are taking the place of shawls and blankets, as articles of head-dress among the women: these Miss Adams is very busy just now in preparing for them.” One skill was lacking, though: “Some one to teach singing is very important. Our people are very urgent about it.” Miss Adams and Hurlburt left Rossville in June 1857, and she does not seem to have been replaced.

The next Rossville missionary, the English-born Robert Brooking, arrived at Rossville in August 1857 with his wife, Elizabeth, and they stayed for three years. Brooking had served on the Gold Coast in Africa for six years, before coming to Canada and working in missions there until his appointment to Oxford House in 1854. Brooking had started out as a manual labourer and his forte was building things — houses, schools, fences, boats, and so on. After Hurlburt left Rossville, Brooking and “his equally committed wife”

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29 Norway House baptismal register, no. 969, aged one month fourteen days.

30 Thomas Hurlburt, journal extract dated 29 December 1854, published in Wesleyan Missionary Notices, no. 5 (November 1855), 69.

31 John Maclean, Vanguards of Canada (Toronto: The Missionary Society of the Methodist Church, 1918), 78–79. Trained as a teacher at the Toronto Normal School, Charlotte Adams taught at Rossville until she and Hurlburt left in 1857. Thanks to Anne Lindsay for identifying Adams.

32 Thomas Hurlburt, letter of 15 December 1856, to Wesleyan Missionary Notices, no. 12 (15 May 1857), 179. Elizabeth Young with her love of and talent for singing would have been greatly appreciated that year.

33 Arthur G. Reynolds, “Hurlburt, Thomas.” Dictionary of Canadian Biography online. Hurlburt’s last baptisms listed in the Norway House baptismal register were in mid-June 1857.

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replaced him, staying until late summer 1860, when they went back to mission work in Canada. Elizabeth died in 1862. 34 Brooking’s writings made a few references to her at Oxford House. On 3 December 1856, he noted of the Oxford Crees, “Christianity is improving their general appearance. . . . I cannot tell you how many ladies’ dresses, and white shirts, Mrs. Brooking has got to cut out and make by Christmas.” (Unlike Elizabeth Young, neither Miss Adams nor Mrs. Brooking seemed to place emphasis on Cree crafts such as quillwork or beadwork.) Records do not speak of her mission work at Rossville; she may have been in poor health. She had no children baptized at Rossville.

The Reverend George McDougall, experienced in eastern Canadian missions, began work at Rossville late in 1860 and remained till early summer 1863 — except for his travels to the west in 1862, which confirmed his wish to pursue mission work on the western plains. He and his wife, Elizabeth, had eight children, and she, of all the wives in this group, had the longest career running the domestic side of a mission and raising a family in that context. But her Rossville service was relatively brief and less well known than her later years. She had one child born at Rossville: George William, baptized by Charles Stringfellow on 18 June 1862. 35

The McDougalls were followed by Charles and Ann Stringfellow, who, in 1857, soon after their marriage in Upper Canada, had been dispatched to serve at Oxford House when the Brookings moved to Rossville in Hurlburt’s place. The Stringfellows began their Rossville service in summer 1863. They had one child baptized there, Sarah Elizabeth, born 18 February 1866, and, as noted earlier, lost a small child in a scalding accident. 36 When Egerton and Elizabeth Young took their place in August 1868, Ann Stringfellow was in poor health; she probably lacked the stamina to engage with mission work as Elizabeth was to do.

The story of the Youngs’ successors, the Reverend and Mrs. John Ruttan and the Reverend Orrin German, whom Egerton Young met briefly before he left Rossville in early September 1873, offers a few more glimpses of mission wives. John Ruttan, aged about twenty-three, arrived newly ordained and newly married to Ellen Beddome, aged about nineteen; writing to Elizabeth

35 Norway House baptismal register, no. 1148, aged 8½ months.
36 Norway House baptismal register, no. 1262, 27 May 1866. As Sarah Elizabeth turns up in later censuses, she was not the scalding victim.
in September 1873 (see Part III, sec. 11), Young remarked that “Mrs. Ruttan is very young and will have much to learn. The Lord help her.” The Ruttnans were musically inclined: in the same letter, Young wrote, “They have a beautiful organ, so our dear little melodion has its song put out.” The Reverend George Young, reporting on his visit to the Rossville mission in January in 1875, praised them both, writing that Ruttan’s “excellent young wife, right from the Wesleyan Ladies’ College, Hamilton, only a few weeks elapsing from the day she left her studies till she entered upon her duties in this far-off mission, has been ‘a helper indeed’ to her husband.” On 3 January 1875, he baptized their first child, Eva, born 26 April 1874.\(^{37}\) The extent of Ellen’s involvement in mission work is not clear; certainly she and John arrived without prior experience or knowledge of the people and language. Her family responsibilities grew apace; the Norway House Wesleyan baptismal register recorded two more children born in 1875 and 1876, just over a year apart.\(^{38}\)

When John Ruttan began serving at Rossville, the schoolteacher was Peter Badger, a Cree of mixed descent from Red River who had been teaching there since the 1860s. He was bilingual; according to David Pentland, “he must have been an excellent interpreter, able to switch easily from English to the most colloquial Cree.”\(^{39}\) In June 1875, however, Badger left Norway House with twenty families who were departing to settle at White Mud River, the first landing place of the Rossville people who were soon to be relocated to Fisher River.\(^{40}\) In early August 1875, Miss Clementina Batty arrived from Ontario to teach the school, and by 28 September Ruttan was writing to his church superiors that Miss Batty “cannot be too highly spoken of”

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38 Norway House baptismal register, no. 1619, Sarah Ann, born 20 July 1875, and no. 1696, William Arthur, born 25 August 1876.


40 Badger’s original arrival date at Rossville is not clear, but the Norway House baptismal register, no. 1307, records the baptism, in November 1866, of Rachel Harriet, daughter of Peter and Harriet Badger, born 11 October 1866. On Badger’s move to become the teacher at White Mud, see Ruttan’s report dated 18 June 1875 in *Missionary Notices of the Methodist Church of Canada, 3rd ser.*, no. 4 (October 1875), 62.
for her diligence, piety, and emphasis on teaching English. Included in Part 111 (sec. 9) is Egerton’s description of some aspects of Rossville teaching under the Youngs, followed by Miss Batty’s account of some changes that she began to make; her story of the shawls is reminiscent of Miss Adams’s tireless production of “caps and bonnets” to replace traditional female head coverings. Both Miss Batty and Ruttan were more insistent in their efforts to promote European dress, and also the use of English, than the Youngs or Peter Badger had been, and the role of Cree in the students’ schooling was surely diminished.  

Then, in 1877, Miss Batty and the Reverend Orrin German were married, and she joined him at his Oxford mission; her sister, Sarah Elizabeth, evidently stepped in for a while as the Rossville schoolteacher. When the Ruttans left Rossville in June 1879, the Germans moved there from Oxford House, remaining until summer 1883. Orrin German was learning Cree, and by late 1876 he thought he could do without an interpreter: “I am far from being thoroughly master of the language, but I think I shall be able to make myself understood.” Available sources do not comment on the closeness of the Germans’ involvement with their parishioners. Clementina German, like Ellen Ruttan, had three children baptized at Rossville; both had heavy family duties, and no record indicates that they had an equivalent of Little Mary to help out.  

In sum, from 1840 to 1883, a total of nine Methodist missionary wives served with their husbands at Rossville. The only one whom we can know reasonably well, through her own writings and those of others, is Elizabeth Young. Further details about the other wives and their work may be gleaned from closer archival study. But unless new sources surface, it appears that knowledge of them must come mainly from the writings of others. The information

41 In a column titled “Rossville Mission, Norway House,” Miss Batty wrote rather disparagingly about Badger: “Unhappily, the school for the last fifteen or sixteen years has been taught by a native teacher, and though the children read the English with tolerable fluency, they neither speak nor understand it.” (A copy of the column, probably written in 1876 for Missionary Notices or the Christian Guardian, is in the Egerton R. Young scrapbook.)

42 Missionary Notices of the Methodist Church of Canada, 3rd ser., no. 11 (January 1877), 187; Norway House baptismal register, no. 1896, Williamina Batty, born 18 September 1878; no. 1997, Orrin Charles Clement, born 7 June 1880; and no. 2108, Jacob, born 18 December 1881 and baptized 28 March 1882, noted also as the date of his death.
at hand, however, conveys some sense of the range of variation among them, as well as their similarities. In age, they ranged from the nineteen-year-old Ellen Ruttan to women in their forties. The younger ones were of course more prone to pregnancies; Sophia Mason had at least four children while at Rossville, and Elizabeth Young, Ellen Ruttan, and Clementina German each had three. The Hurlburts, McDougalls, and Stringfellows each had a child born there, too; only the Evanses and Brookings had none. The wives’ formal education, so far as known, ranged from small-town schools (Elizabeth Young) to courses of study at ladies’ colleges (Ellen Ruttan). Some were daughters of ministers or class leaders (Betsy Hurlburt, Elizabeth Young); Sophia Mason grew up in the Church of England and came to Methodism through marriage.

Elizabeth’s work at Rossville paralleled much of what other wives did there — sewing, making garments, visiting the sick — and all bore major responsibilities, even if unspoken, for food and housekeeping. Like Mary Evans, Elizabeth encouraged Cree women’s crafting of traditional items. With Little Mary’s residency in the household, she had a resource at hand that no other wife likely had, as well as an appreciation for such skills (compare the image of Mrs. Brooking sewing white shirts and dresses to “improve” the appearance of the local Native population). Sophia Mason was unique in her Cree proficiency. Elizabeth, however, worked hard at learning the language, and her practice in singing Cree hymns surely helped. Sources do not mention whether the other wives had their own dog trains, but Elizabeth’s team (and driver) certainly extended the scope and independence of her work in the community. She was also on her own more often than most of the other wives. Egerton took seriously the extension of his circuit duties to as many communities as he could reach “by canoe and dog-train,” and was often gone for weeks at a time. Evans and George McDougall also travelled widely from Rossville, but the other missionaries do not appear to have taken long trips — except to the Oxford mission and to Red River, with stops along the way.

Methodist churchmen from the mid-1800s to the early 1900s recognized, after their fashion, the critical contributions of missionary wives to their husbands’ vocations. As noted in the introduction, the Reverend Morley Punshon, in his valedictory sermon to the Youngs and other missionaries who were about to leave for the northwest in May of 1868, exhorted his listeners to pray that their wives, “with frailer organizations, though perhaps
a well-knit network of nerves — for there is not so much of the robust muscular strength — may be preserved for the trial.”

Fifty years later, the Reverend John Maclean devoted the last ten pages of his *Vanguards of Canada* — brief biographies of thirteen men notable for their importance to Canadian Methodist missions — to a chapter titled, “Heroines of Western Canada.” “Who shall give a record,” he asked, “of the heroic women of the mission house, far removed from the haunts of civilization, with dusky maids and mothers as their only neighbors, and exposed to the hardships of the frontier . . . in primitive log houses and disjointed frame buildings, on the shores of northern lakes and far inland rivers, and even in the Arctic wilds, women of beauty and refinement have lived in dense solitude, that they might win a few savages as disciples of the great Christ.” The chapter then related several anecdotes about individual wives and their courage, faith, and suffering — among them “Mrs. E. R. Young, patient and faithful, telling the wonderful story of love.” Maclean ended with an assurance that “the days of heroic endeavor have not passed away. . . . Brave women like Mrs. S. D. Gaudin and Mrs. Fred Stevens on Lake Winnipeg, and others in the far west, are still standing at the outposts of civilization, guarding the frontier for Christ, and glad of opportunities to do their bit for the Empire and the human race.”

If Elizabeth Young read Maclean’s words in 1918 (and she probably did, as she maintained a life-long relationship with her church and church literature), she doubtless was pleased about his recognition of mission wives and their work. But she herself never wrote about outposts of civilization, frontiers, or empire; her portrayals of her work are concrete and down to earth. “Heroines” is hagiography, with a few anecdotes tucked in, to round out Maclean’s previous 250 pages of stories about heroic mission men. It is fortunate that a few missionary women on occasion have spoken of their work and experiences in their own words.

43 Maclean, *Vanguards of Canada*, 252, 259, 261–62. Maclean’s generalization about dusky maids did not allow for highly placed HBC officers’ wives such as Mrs. Robert Hamilton (mentioned earlier), whose mother was half Cree, or Mrs. Donald Ross, longtime resident of Norway House, who, as the daughter of Red River Selkirk settlers, was not a “dusky” neighbour.