

This is Club member Janet Casey's story about some exceptional members of her family.

My 3rd great grandmother on my father's side was born in 1778. She was a Mennonite in Lancaster, PA as was her husband, and they married when she was 23.

In 1825, as they were preparing to move to Waterloo, Ontario, my great grandfather cut his wrist accidentally on an awl. Unfortunately it became infected and he soon died. A few weeks later my great grandmother finished packing up her family and moved with her 11 children to Waterloo - about a 500 mile journey by wagon. They were part of a migration of Mennonites to Canada that occurred in the 1820's.

Then there's my mother. She was raised on a potato farm in PEI in the early 1900's. Life was quite hard in rural PEI at that time with no hydro and a wood cook stove. My mom and siblings had to walk 2 miles to school, but this often was not possible in winter due to excessive snowfall.

At age 14, when my grandmother suddenly passed away, my mother took on the job of raising her younger sister and brother, looking after the cooking and cleaning for my father and the farm hands (baking bread and desserts daily) and doing a lot of farm hand chores. Mom used to brag that she could easily win arm wrestling matches against the farm hands. Even though she was a teenager, she was expected to lift 50 lb. bags of potatoes at harvest time. During WW2 Mom moved to Ottawa to join the public service, and after a long career in medical office administration she retired at age 91.

Looks like I have some strong women in my family history. And I'm grateful that I did not have the challenges that these women faced.