

John Richardson: A Genealogical Narrative

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The genealogical narrative of the Richardson family begins with John Richardson and Helen Taylor, both of whom have left behind very little of their own history. The exact date of John Richardson coming to Canada from England is not known. The 1871 census tells us he was born in England and was 49 yrs old in that year. His wife Helen Taylor was born in Kingston Ont. (1901 census and her death certificate) His occupation is listed as a shoemaker and he lived in Huron South. .It can also be inferred that John's legal name was John Stanley Richardson, as this is what is recorded on his son Charles' marriage certificate from 1910.

A living family member, John Richardson the fourth, revealed that his great great-great grandfather had a shoe store in Sturgeon Falls which is likely as he is listed as a shoemaker on the 1871 census.

John married Helen Taylor, daughter of Thomas Taylor and a Miss Sellar . According to a marker at the Union Cemetery in Sturgeon Falls, Ont., John Richardson died March 10, 1896.

Helen Taylor Richardson died of senile decay in Sturgeon Falls, March 14, 1916. She was living with her daughter Mary Ann Richardson at the time of her death, on King Street, Sturgeon Falls.

John and Helen had four children

- 1: Helen born Nov. 8, 1858, died Dec. 25, 1927
- 2: Mary Ann born May 31, 1861, died Jan. 18, 1946
- 3: John William born Aug 23, 1863, died Aug. 20, 1938
- 4: Charles Sellars Sept. 5, 1869, died (date unknown)

Helen and Mary never married but remained in the house on King Street until they died. Besides keeping boarders, Helen (a k a Nellie) was a dressmaker and the 1901 census showed she earned \$300 that year. The boarding house business brought in \$600 and Charles added to the revenues working as a farm labourer earning \$400 that same year. (1901 census).

Mary Ann Richardson resided in Sturgeon Falls for many years, and was looked after by her brother, J. W. , even after his death. In his will, John William Richardson left his sister Mary Ann Richardson

the sum of \$70.00 per month in advance from the date of my death as long as she lives, but such bequest however is upon the condition that she does first assign all her interest in my insurance in the United Workmen and Loyal Orange Lodge to my Trustees to be part of the corpus of my estate (J.W. Richardson "Last Will and Testament" April 29, 1938)

There was also a provision in J.W.'s will that contained an annuity for his sister Mary of \$900.00 per annum, payable monthly if she were to fulfill the provisions mentioned above. This seemed to be an incentive offered to prevent her from making any claim to the insurance on his membership in the Orange Lodge.

Charles married at age 42 to Emma Jane Holt, June 23, 1910, Nipissing District. (Charles Richardson Marriage Cert. 1910). Very little is known about him.

As this is a narrative of J.W. Richardson, we will concentrate on him. J.W. was a pioneer, mayor, leading merchant and a horticulturist in North Bay. It was reported in a 1936 issue of the "North Bay Nugget" his first job was working with G.F. Marter, and ex-M.P.P. of Gravenhurst, Ontario, in general merchandising. Later J.W. went to Winnipeg and entered the hardware business. He also gained experience as a tinsmith by working on the roof of the parliament building. He relinquished this job to enlist for service in the North West Rebellion of 1881 but as there were no vacancies in the regiment at the time he decided to head east and visit his parents.

In 1885, at the age of twenty-two, J.W. went into business for himself and was the only business from Ferguson St. to Fraser St. His great, great grandson claims there may have been some arrangement between John Ferguson and Richardson about the land where his store was situated before the actual formal sale in 1889. Allegedly, Ferguson may have allowed Richardson to open for business with a rent to own agreement in place but there

is no proof this may have been the case. However it is reported that J.W. opened his store in 1885 and that he had to shovel snow from the Pacific Hotel (corner Ferguson St.) to the Queens Hotel, (corner Fraser St.) if he expected anyone to frequent his store.

According to a land deed obtained at the Nipissing Land Registry Office, John William Richardson purchased the land from John Ferguson February 19, 1889. The property in question is described as lot no. 107 “said land being part of Township lot no.20, con D of the Township of Widdifield...containing by measurements one fifth of an acre” (Land Deed 1889). In May of that same year, J.W. sold one tenth of this property to George Knapp for \$1200.00 an obvious profit which may have provided Richardson with the finances to build his store which began as a tinsmith shop. The store operated in North Bay for over 100 years, transforming from a tinsmith shop to a hardware and general store, adding fine china and gifts, furniture and finally a sporting goods section. Many generations of the family were active in running the business over the years.

As a savvy business man, John William sold the lot next to his store for \$1.00 on Main and Fraser for the government to build the \$50,000 lime stone post office. The thinking behind this venture was that the post office would generate traffic for his store and he was absolutely right.

John William Richardson married Eliza Hill, daughter of Thomas Hill from Portage La Prairie, Manitoba sometime between 1884 and the birth of Ellen in 1886. There are no records available at the time of writing to confirm the exact date.

They had four children.

Ellen G. (Nellie) born June 19, 1886, died 1987
Leola born March 10, 1888, death date unknown
John Stanley born June 5, 1890, died Dec. 11, 1964.
Willard Reard born Apr 4, 1904, died Sept. 27, 1979.

Ellen age 23, married Edwin Charles Shepherd age, 29, in York, Ont. July 1, 1909. They had one son, Jack.. Edwin died tragically while serving in W.W. 1 and was buried in

Flanders Field. Ellen never married again. She was a very active member of the community as well as working in the store. In 1975 she was commemorated as North Bay's honoured citizen during the city's 50th anniversary.

Leola Richardson's life remains somewhat of a mystery. It seems she left home in her early-to-mid twenties and can be found listed as a passenger headed to the Detroit Michigan Harper Hospital. A closer look at the passenger ticket revealed that Leola was in fact a student at the time and perhaps was attending this hospital for her training. The date of landing is listed as April 12, 1917 on the D & W Ferry. Relatives interviewed in North Bay, shared Leola married a surgeon named Joseph Gray and that she was an accomplished opera singer. (Ed. note North Bay Nugget May 22, 1923 Miss Leola Richardson has accepted the position of Public Health Nurse in Moncton N.B.)

John Stanley Richardson (29 yrs old) married Evangeline Morton, (20yrs old) daughter of Thomas & Della Morton on July 1, 1919.

J.W. and Eliza's last child William Reard was born thirteen years after John Stanley. Willard married Annabel Dickey, daughter of Robert J and Elizabeth Dickey.

John William Richardson became one of North Bay's most influential and active citizens by contributing to the building of this city in many ways. He served as mayor in 1902 and during the hard times of the depression from 1932-1933. During both periods, J.W. donated his stipend back to the city. At one time he was chairman of the original town planning commission. He served on the public and collegiate school boards. He was largely responsible for the organization of the North Bay Horticultural Society and served as its chair. One of his number one priorities was the beautification of a number of beauty spots. Among them are the Klock Avenue triangle and fountain and the planning and supervising of the area now known as Lee Park.

Another interesting fact about John William, starting in 1888, he was the first

headmaster of the Orange Order in North Bay for nine of its first seventeen years.

He was a devout Methodist and with his family attended Trinity Methodist Church.

J.W. truly loved North Bay and believed whole heartedly that it was and could continue to be a great and beautiful place. He was quoted as saying the following on the day he celebrated his golden jubilee in business, January 14, 1935.

My great hobby has been North Bay, first, last and always...I have seen North Bay develop to such an extent that I have no fear for its future. In fact there is no limit of possibilities for North Bay, so splendidly it is situated geographically to serve the great country to the north. While we are at the present moment passing through a phase of depression, it will give way to good times and opportunity. (North Bay Nugget Sept 1938)

When John William died in 1936, his funeral service was held on August 20, which would have been his 75th birthday. It was written in the *North Bay Nugget*, he died of a heart ailment he had been dealing with for five years. The service was held at Trinity Church, conducted by Dr. E. Crossley Hunter, of Hamilton, formerly of North Bay. J. W. is buried in the family plot at Terrace Lawn Cemetery.

Eliza Hill Richardson, died January 9, 1915 and to her death certificate states the cause of death as carcinoma of the uterus. She had been suffering for three years when she died at age 54. She is buried at Terrace Lawn Cemetery.

(Willard's son) John Richardson, the fourth says the descendants of J.W.

Richardson are still active members of the North Bay Community.

They are:

1. John Richardson (Willard's son)
2. David Richardson (John's son)
3. Judi
4. Cathy Richardson-Valente (John's daughter)

One of J. W.'s first employees, Ruth Gould worked for the Richardson Store for fifty years. She well remembered the many changes the store went through. Ruth was interviewed sometime before she died and the interview is preserved on DVD. She clarified many facts and myths. In the interview, Ruth said that during the early years

of business, J.W. would personally deliver Christmas gifts to children in a horse drawn sleigh. John IV said he can remember how his father Willard kept up the tradition for many years. Ted Darling, a North Bay resident, played Santa for twenty years for the Richardson Store.

Ruth and John both mentioned a pot belly stove that heated the store and was situated in the middle of the store. J.W. being an early riser, would fire it up long before other Main Street merchants lit theirs. For years to come it became a tradition for local merchants and employees to meet around the stove and exchange local happening of the still growing city

In 1998 the business sadly ended in a horrible fire. John Richardson IV was running the store at the time and had to make the final decision not to reopen and to day all that is left is a vacant lot.