

# **The Story Behind the Stained Glass Windows**

## **by Eleanor (Coulson) Coulter**

### **Preface**

In the early part of the 19th Century, two of the families who joined the Great Migration from England to Canada were the Coulsons and the Gunbys. In time, their descendants were among the founding fathers of the church today known as Lowville United Church.

**Burdge Gunby**  
**1839 - 1930**

**Eleanor Morden Crooker**  
**1836 - 1919**

Burdge Gunby was my maternal grandfather, the seventh child and third son of William and Mary (Pycock) Gunby, who came to Canada in 1833 from Lincolnshire, England and settled eventually on a large holding of 200 acres between Nelson - Flamborough Town Line and Cedar Springs Road. They had three small children, one of whom died soon after arrival. They first built a small frame house but as their family increased, a house of about a dozen rooms was erected across the lane facing the Town Line.

In the Annals of the Methodist Church, William Gunby was listed as a lay preacher on the Waterdown - Carlisle Circuit. He drove many miles through all kinds of weather, regardless of his own discomfort. Eventually, his health broke down and he died at the early age of 57 on December 31, 1860. He left a family of nine and many good friends, among them a Mark Crooker, also a lay preacher. The Crookers had settled near Carlisle.

Burdge Gunby was converted at the age of 20 and just prior to his father's death, had married Eleanor Morden Crooker, daughter of Mark. Several families of Mordens, United Empire Loyalists living in Pennsylvania, U.S.A., had fled to Canada at the time of the Revolutionary War. They had settled near Dundas.

Burdge's two older brothers had left home on pursuits of their own and when his father had become a lay preacher, it left him with the brunt of the work, so he received little or no schooling. Burdge's father's death and last will and testament had left him with the responsibility of maintaining two households and the large estate that had been successfully established. As his siblings gradually



left home and were married, Burdge and Eleanor moved into the larger house and there raised six daughters (the youngest one being my mother, Eleanor) and one son. After getting his late father's affairs in order and the farm running smoothly, Burdge felt a call to become a lay preacher.

In local church prayer meetings, Burdge's intreating pleas of God's love and care had helped many to choose the better way of a Christian life.

Grandma Gunby, an excellent scholar, proved to be a most helpful partner, reading with Grandpa Burdge in the evenings to further his knowledge of the Bible. They studied other helpful books to prepare his messages.

From a hand-written "Waterdown Circuit Plan - April, May & June, 1860, Burdge Gunby was to be the local preacher at Rock Chapel, Millgrove, Hamilton's Brock Road and Harper's #6 Highway at seven services in those three months". At various times later, he continued to preach where and when needed. The name of Burdge Gunby became a household word in various communities.

Grandpa Burdge was six feet tall and due to his strict temperate habits, was in robust health. His voice was strong and clear and he spread the Gospel message with earnest heart and did so into his later years. Grandpa's general manner and kindness to relatives, neighbours and friends, regardless of religious creed or political belief, endeared him to a vast community.

As well as in the Pulpit, activities included Church Courts and Conference Assemblies. How he carried out his responsibilities and still had time to enjoy his own way of farm living, is a mystery to us all. Grandpa was a good rifleman and would like to hunt out the rodents which threatened his crops and livestock. His study of horticulture and the best methods of farming, enabled him to leave a legacy of rich farm land and fruitful orchards.

Grandma Gunby was small in stature, but a bundle of energetic domesticity. She managed her large household well but took time out for her own hobbies, one of which was making summer hats and bonnets from wheat straws. She gathered these herself, choosing ones of the same size and quality, braiding, pressing and sewing them in strips. It was an honour to wear one of Grandma's crafted straw hats. She escaped her busy household on Saturdays by rising at 4



a.m. and driving her own horse and buggy to Hamilton Market where she had regular customers for her dairy products.

The Gunby's held a grand celebration of their Golden Wedding Anniversary in 1910. Soon after that date, the clan returned to the Old Homestead for Gunby Reunions which are held annually to this day, only recessing for World War 11.

**John Coulson**  
**1843 - 1925**

**Frances Colling**  
**1845 - 1917**

John Coulson was my paternal grandfather, born to Thomas Coulson, son of John Coulson Sr. born in 1777 and the first generation of the Coulsons in Canada. John Sr. came from Yorkshire, England in 1832-35.

John Coulson Jr married Frances Colling, daughter of Thomas Colling and granddaughter of Joseph Colling, also a first generation in Canada. Joseph had come from the York area of England in 1821 and settled on the Blind Line. Official records show that Joseph Colling had established a small frame church for the Methodists in the Lowville area and it was named Collings Church. Later Joseph gave land for the present church - Lowville United, built in 1872 - 73. His son Thomas gave the land for the property for the first Methodist Parsonage, also built around that time.

John and Frances Coulson were married in 1865. It is not clear where they lived for the first few years but I recall Grandpa Coulson mentioning Eramosa Township in Wellington County; then an older cousin told me her mother was born in a house near Brookville, Nassageweya County. They finally established their homestead at Mount Nemo where Reg Coulson, a great grandson and his family now live. The eastern boundary of their farm was the drop off cliffs of a projection of the Niagara Escarpment, a fascination place for the grandchildren to visit.

Grandpa and Grandma Coulson raised a large family of four sons and six daughters. The eldest son was killed in a tree felling accident when he was 20, leaving my father, Edwin, as the oldest of the remaining three boys. Grandpa was a good farmer and caretaker, very fair in his dealings with people. His was a mild nature and he was not prone to



raise a fuss about decisions so Grandma became the more dominant one and ruled her big family with a firm hand. She was usually present to welcome her grandchildren into the world. To date, genealogy records show that Grandma Coulson has more descendants than anyone else in other branches of Colling lineage. Males have outnumbered females.

Both grandmothers were firm believers in their effective home remedies in cases of accident or sickness. They used bread poultices for infections; mustard plasters for congestion of the lungs; sulfur sprinkled on a hot stove to kill germs and hot salt baths for blood poisoning.

Sundays found the whole family in church, each one active in various appointments and activities. The family also helped to establish Sunday afternoon Sunday School in the Mount Nemo schoolhouse during the early days. In the evening the day would end with a hymn sing around the organ; the family all had excellent voices for song which as one of Grandma's delights. (It would make her proud to know that sixth and seventh generation descendants still sing in the church choir).

In March of 1915, the Coulsons had a grand celebration of their 50th Wedding Anniversary. During that period of World War 1, they showed their patriotism by flying the Union Jack from the tallest tree and indoor decor included smaller flags and red, white and blue bunting, among a mass of early spring flowers.

When they retired from the farm, they lived in a frame house near Lowville store, where Verna Peer, a great granddaughter, now lives.

Grandpa came to our home to live after Grandma died. We were a large household but he was used to that. He was no trouble and became a nice companion for the younger children. He kept up his interest in current affairs and avidly read the daily newspapers and farm publications. Grandpa was meticulous in his grooming and we all admired his silky silvery beard and head of white hair.

#### Ending

In the 1950's two memorial windows were installed in Lowville United Church by members of the families. The



stained glass window on the North wall of the Sanctuary honours the Gunbys and on the South wall, one of similar beauty is a memorial to the Coulsons. To most people this was an ordinary occurrence. But to 13 grandchildren among the dozens of both couples, it had a double meaning.

The Gunbys and Coulsons were drawn closer by two marriages in their families. Edwin B Coulson, oldest son of John & Frances Coulson, married Eleanor Gunby, (my parents) youngest daughter of Burdge and Eleanor Gunby on December 19, 1900. Then a few years later, William Gunby, only son of Burdge and Eleanor Gunby married Mabel Coulson, one of the daughters of John and Frances Coulson. So the two sets of grandparents eventually had 13 grandchildren who were double cousins.

I'm sure all of us take pride in the fact that our grandparents on both sides of our family have been honoured by the placement of these beautiful stained glass windows. We look on them as a symbol of their long and colourful life together. Sad experiences and family tragedies had been endured with faith, strength and courage, for they had built their lives on the firm foundations of a living faith in God.

Lovingly remembered

*Eleanor B. Coulter*