Dear Pat:
My Mom's sister, Lil (Shrive) asked Mom to write this for her as she only vaguely remembered England. Marion Adams

MY STORY...by Mabel Jane Goodchild

I was born in Kington St. Michael, a village in Wiltshire, Eng. on July 28/88 and christened Mabel Jane Coleman.

(1888)

There was a long road between the top and bottom ends of our village. At the bottom was the church, school, two stores and two public houses. Also, there was a row of about eight almshouses where certain elderly folk could live. In between top and bottom were three farms, a blacksmith shop, a Wesleyan Chapel and the allotments (garden plots) which were rented to residents. Dad had one and we had all kinds of vegetables, and we would often take carrots, peas, radish, even break off cauliflower and pull a young onion and finish with a stick of rhubarb. When potatoes were new, Mam would take a pail and dig them and we picked them up. She just scrubbed and cooked them.

As soon as we got home from school we changed and went roaming the fields for lovely blue and white violets, primroses, cowslips, bluebells and oxslips, and sometimes armfuls of moon daisies.

In the season, Reg and I got up early and put on old clothes and shoes, as the grass was wet, and we gathered mushrooms. Then Reg would go to school and I to Chippenham, a town 3 miles away where Dad and Grandfather Tom and Uncle Bill worked. A store took all the mushrooms I could take him. Then I would go to the bacon factory, a huge place that had a retail counter where they sold all parts of pigs that weren't 'joints'. These were all wholesale. It was the home of the world-renowned Wiltshire bacon. I rode my bike and was loaded down with meat for ourselves, relatives and neighbours. The money we got from mushrooms was saved and on August Bank Holiday, Dad rented a wagonette and took us to the flower show. We kids were most interested in the amusements, like swinging boats, where you sat opposite each other and pulled on a rope. There were round-a-bouts, shooting galleries etc. and fireworks.

The school was a long room with a fireplace and schoolmasters desk in the middle; and we sat on benches holding 5 or 6 girls and boys together, with a desk in front, having ink wells. We used large slates without a frame and had copy books. We had no homework. This room had from Standard 1 - 7. A student teacher helped. Back of this room there was a smaller room for babies. In the afternoons we girls learned sewing, knitting, darning, etc. I knit my Dad a pair of long, woollen stockings that came above his knees. As I was the oldest student I was often called upon to help teach the younger children. I left school early summer, before I was 12 years old, because my mother was sick.

Dad rode his bike and had to be in Chippenham by 6 a.m. each day.

Two of my brothers and I had bikes.

The school was under the direction of the church, and often either the Vicar or the Squire would come in and take over, while the schoolmaster stood back. We only had one month holiday. Two or three times a year, some one would come and give away red flannel for petticoats or blankets; and at Harvest Thanksgiving it was the lovely bread or fruit. Some of my chums used to get some to take home and I always waited to hear my name called, but never got any. Years later, I realized why: the folks who got it

worked on the farms or estates, while we were outsiders. Anyway, Dad would never have accepted any charity. Someone (usually old ladies) had left money so that these gifts could be given each year.

Though a drove of cows passed our door morning and night, we weren't allowed to buy milk. The farmers considered it a favour, as it was sent to the milk factory at Chippenham.

In summer, sometimes the wells went dry and water had to be fetched from a spring in the middle of a field down one hill and up the other. The name of the field was EMPTY. These fields had small streams between and at one spot the farmer had made it deep enough for cattle to drink. Our boys used to paddle in it. Mother caught Red once and chased him all the way home. Mother bought us little tin buckets as it was a long way to carry the water, which was usually only half full when we got home. There was another well not far away and very deep and we had to use a windlass. Trouble was, the bucket got caught on the side of the well and we lost it!

Considering that we lived in the country, we got little fruit. Most farmers and gentry grew only enough for themselves. Sometimes we found the odd wild strawberry and we did pick a lot of blackberries to make into jam. Once in a while a hawker would come out with horse and trap. He had scales, to weigh fish, plums, etc. Fritz says that he bought up the surplus in stores. We nearly lived on mushrooms in season, and they were big brown ones

If we had a snowstorm we were sent out to collect nice clean snow, enough to make a quart bottle of snow water. It was kept for burns. Also, Mam always kept a thick slice of very fat bacon. It was wrapped in writing paper, as there was no wax paper, and put safely away until it got mellow (rasty). When the boys got an earache, Mam would scrape a thin slice, roll it and put it in the ear with a bit of cotton batting. This melted and soon broke the pain. Also, there was a very common weed lying flat on the ground, with good-sized leaves. One side was smooth and the other fuzzy. One side was for drawing out a thorn and the other side for healing. It worked.

At Christmas we would pick holly out of the hedges and place it behind pictures etc and someone always found some mistletoe. It grew in branches of apple trees. Reg and I picked a Christmas tree and took it home but had forgotten the knife and had to go back for it, even though it was getting dark. The tree was set in a flower pot on the table. The field where we cut it was the same one where we got most of the mushrooms. There was a superstition that a Will of the Wisp was there, and we were careful not to look that way if we had to be out at night, as the belief was that if you once got your eyes set on this light it would take you over hill and dale till morning. No doubt it was a farmer out looking for his sheep, with a lantern, but we didn't know that. One Christmas, Reg and I went with two neighbour girls and their big brother, who took a lantern. We sang Christmas carols at farmhouses, walking over fields and climbing stiles. It was fun and we were asked in to sing and then given apples and money, which was divided between us.

In summer we roamed the fields and picked lovely white and purple violets, bluebells, cowslips, moondaisies, etc. We rarely went home empty-handed.

In the hunting season the hunters and dogs would sometimes pass our house, the men in pink jackets and the ladies riding side saddle with long skirts. One year, Dad and Uncle Frank had agreed to reap a field of wheat with scythes

Dad had a horse and trap and Aunty Comfort and Mam stocked the sheaves. We made a fire of the stubble and roasted potatoes and cooked eggs from the farm. It was lovely riding home on the floor of the trap in the moonlight.

I don't remember Grandfather Coleman or Grandmother Light, as they both died when I was 5; but I spent a lot of time at Grandfather Tom's, as Aunty Comfort (Mam's sister) kept house for he and Uncle Bill, until she married, and then Grandfather Tom married Sally. Aunty Comfort never went out to work but helped Granny make sunbonnets for a store. They were made of print- usually white with grey or mauve in the pattern. It was all hand work. Rows of stitching, and then piping cord was threaded through and pulled up with an occasional little frill standing up. There was a curtain to protect the neck, with strings. When finished, thick starch was rubbed in and they were set in the sunshine on the end of a chair to dry. They made them by the dozens. The frills were gophered. (I still have Grandma Coleman's gophering iron (Marion)).

The house was in the middle of three houses and had a thatched roof and diamond pane windows. They had a large, long oven beside the fireplace for baking bread. First they'd build a fire of faggots (bundles of wood). When the oven was hot enough the ashes were scraped out, the oven cleaned, and the loaves were put in, using a paddle made of wood, very much like a boat paddle. The big door was closed till the bread was done, then Lardy Cakes were put in. (I have the recipe for Lardy Cakes - delicious! (Marion)) At bedtime a copper warming pan was filled with red hot coals and rubbed over the sheets to warm them as we had no flannelette sheets. The pan was something like a dishpan with a lid and a long handle.

We had no newspapers so everything was saved, even letters, and I used to make 'spills' from them. They were put in a vase on a shelf and Granfer Tom would light the spill from the fire to light his pipe. There was no wax paper and few bags, so workmen used to carry their lunch in a red and white handkerchief. Lunch was usually a chunk of homemade bread with a hole cut out for a lump of butter (if you were lucky), a chunk of cheese and a big Spanish onion. Granfer Tom and Uncle Bill were sawyers. I remember seeing them, Uncle down in a pit, like they do in garages, and Grandpa on top with a big tree, and a huge cross-cut saw, pulling it up and down all day long, cutting it into boards.

Dad had a pony named Topper. He used to drive to work 3 miles. In Spring, I used to help get his potatoes ready for planting on Good Friday. If the potatoes were big, I cut them so that each piece had 'eyes', and set them in a shallow box to sprout. We had a parrot that belonged to a retired General and his wife who had lived in India. Mam used to work for them years before. When they separated, my mother took the parrot and we had it until after we moved to Corsham. This was when I started dressmaking with a young woman from Wales. Not long after starting, I took sick and the Dr. said it was the sitting and it would kill me, so I stayed home and worked.

Dad had built us a nice house and bought a new piano and I started taking lessons, but the young woman teacher went back home and the only other piano teacher was a man and I wouldn't go. Corsham was a nice town and had several fine estates in the district. Most of the houses were built of Bathstone and it was quarried on the outskirts. I was taken down and saw huge stacks of this stone sawn into blocks. During the war the quarries were used to store shells and explosives and other security items. Uncle Harry worked in one, near Bath. We stayed at Corsham about 6 years.

Then Dad decided we would move to Bath so that Reg, Maurice and I could get work. The trouble was, Dad couldn't find work, as Bath was not an industrial city. The mineral water was its most thriving business and the hotels and large boarding-houses, which were beautiful old homes, were busy with people with rheumatism and such. They went to the Baths for the waters special properties. Bath was like a basin so you had to go uphill to get out. Lots of these folks were crippled and used wheel chairs.

Bath Abbey and the Pump Rooms are lovely buildings and in winter it is quite usual to see steam coming from an open window as the water is tepid. There is a fountain in the square for folks to get a drink of the mineral water. I tried it once and once was enough.

I was lonely in Bath as I only knew the girls I worked with and only one was friendly. I was the only one who lived too far away to go home for lunch so after I had eaten I had to walk the streets. This one girl suggested I walk and meet her and that's what I did, as I was not used to Bath. She was a jolly girl and she poked fun at me for the way I talked. She had big, wide-awake eyes and she threatened to get matchsticks to prop mine open. It was a miserable place to work, although high-class. Mom took sick and I had to leave. Later I got another job and it was so different. It was such a nice change from the other, but I had to leave again as I was needed at home. Later I went to private homes, two days a week at two different places, and one day at another. There was another house I could go to on Saturdays but it was at Bathford and a long darkwalk to the bus. Right across the street from the room I sewed in was the churchyard, and a few doors up the street was the house where Fritz was born, and lived in until a short time before, though I didn't know him then. (I think this was the Briscoe house where Mom worked. (M.A.)) I saw the house when we went back to England after WW2 and we went to a service in the church where Fritz' father had been caretaker.

Reg worked in the office of a wholesale greengrocer. He had large gardens at Bathford and he went to Covent Garden, London, and bought fruit, etc. and had it sent by train each day. Fritz drove the big horse and lorry and delivered the orders to different stores; and sometimes drove a team of horses to the Bristol docks to get a load of bananas. One Sunday, Reg brought Fritz home to tea and that was the first time I met him. I stayed in the scullery as long as I could because I didn't want to go in. I liked him, though I don't remember him coming again. Then we decided to come to Canada because Dad couldn't get work. Dad used to go into town and come home with books about Canada. Finally, he said he was going alone if no one else would go. We were all willing, but Reg's boss coaxed him to stay and said he was intending to open a new store in Bristol and would put Reg in charge. Reg was tempted but Mam said that if Reg stayed, she would too. Finally, Reg decided to come so we sold up and left Bath at 11 p.m. on March 19, 1908. Fritz was there at the station to wish us good-bye.

We arrived at Liverpool early next morning and set sail March 20/08 on the Empress of Ireland. It was a stormy crossing. There were 900 immigrants and three sittings at every meal. We didn't go down for two or three days. Dad was the only one not sea-sick. Arch wasn't sick, but lost the use of his legs. The Stewardess brought us some broth -- it was like greasy dishwater. We couldn't take it, so Dad paid one of the stewardesses to get us some beef tea. Mam had a small tin trunk with biscuits, apples, jams, etc. so the first day we felt well enough to go on the sheltered deck, Dad went down to our cabin to get us a treat. Ours was the first cabin for passengers next to

the crews quarters, in the very front of the ship (the forecastle). There was quite a high sill into each babin. A big wave had come over and the stuff on the floor was floating around. Dad had to fetch a sailor to mop it up. It was so rough, the wind and waves had torn a large door off its hinges at the top of the stairs (the companionway) and when the ship's carpenter tried to mend it, the waves coming overboard threw him aside and broke his ribs! Only about the last two days was it pleasant and we were overdue, due to the storm.

The first class passengers were landed in Halifax, N.S. but we were taken to St. John, N.B. The crew were anxious, because if they could not land us by 7 p.m. Saturday, they would have to keep us till Monday morning. Anyway, we got off in time. Owing to the storm we were a day overdue. We were herded into a huge wooden building, very cold, and had to stand in line to go through customs. There were 7 of us: Dad, Mam, Mabel, Reg, Mar, Archie and Lily, each with a bundle, and it was hard to keep together, as everyone else was doing the same thing. Finally we got through and Dad settled us on a seat and took Reg to go and claim our belongings, from the hold. Dad was just in time to rescue a big sack of bedding a man was taking away. He had torn off the labels but we had sewn the sacks with string and Dad recognized it. Mam brought feather beds, pillows, blankets, etc. and it would have been a loss. Meanwhile, Reg had managed to buy some cheap chocolates and he ate so many he was sick, so Dad had to bring him back and take Maur to help. Then we were told to get on the train. What a shock!

There was no station nor buildings. It must have been the freight yards. There seemed to be several tracks to walk over to this great monster of an engine. There must have been 3 or 4 there, going in different directions, and each one was tolling that awful bell. Our English trains have a very discreet peep-peep and they're usually down in a cutting. We had to climb up very steep steps at 5 a.m. on a cold March morning.

We were all cold, tired and weary but the train had no nice upholstered seats - only wood. Along the sides above the windows was a big wide board like a large door. It could be let down on 2 chains and was our sleeping accommodation. The boys got up there and when I looked for my new coat I'd made, they had used it for a pillow. We travelled all day Sunday, arriving in Toronto about 10 a.m. Monday, too late for the Hamilton train. Coming from N.B. was a dreary journey through miles and miles of bush. Never a house or a station to be seen, though we did stop at 2 or 3 places and people came on with baskets of food to sell. Mam bought a large packet of soda biscuits and we ate them without butter or cheese. We had never seen any before. At the back of each coach was a huge range, a pile of wood and an axe, if you cared to use it. We had to sleep the best way we could.

We got to Hamilton and our friend, Geo. Cole, met us at the Hunter St. Station and made us walk to Tisdale St., about 2 p.m. - right down King St! Can you imagine what we looked like? Seven of us with bundles? Anyway, we stayed at Cole's for about a month and then rented a house on Oak Avenue, and inherited bed bugs. We had never seen them before, and we worked all summer to get rid of them. Geo. Cole was building himself a house on Barton St. corner of Avondale, so Dad bought the first lot on Avondale north of Barton and built us a house. They both did it after work. We moved in time for Christmas though there were still some inside touches to be done.

My Story...MJG

Not long after we arrived there was a bad thunderstorm and Mam was so frightened that, if we'd had the money, we would have returned to England. When we were young, in a thunderstorm, all knives and steel articles were covered and dark shawls were draped over mirrors, and we were taken into cupboards, and the door closed until the storm was over. Can't you see, even now, I am scared of thunderstorms, but don't fuss? Mothers Aunt and Uncle used to come to Kington St. Michael from London every year, and when there was a thunderstorm he revelled in it and would take his family outside to watch it.

Well, Lil, I think you will remember the rest.

The End

Pat, as I recall, Daddy (Fritz) came to Hamilton the following year, 1909. No doubt he proposed to Mabel, but, as usual, she was needed at home. So he volunteered as an Anglican missionary to York Factory on Hudson's Bay (just south of Churchill) and served there until 1914, returning to Hamilton at the beginning of the first War. He went by train to Winnipeg, which is a long journey even now. There he was met by Indians who took him by canoe and portage the hundreds of miles through the lakes and rivers. There was a yearly supply ship which went from Montreal up past Labrador and down into Hudsons Bay. If you forgot to order something you went without for a year! Daddy didn't say much about his experiences but I know he was appalled by the way the Hudsons Bay Co. Factor kept the Metis, Eskimos and Indians constantly in debt to him, by unfair pricing of pelts. I think he was very disillusioned with the Mission too. During the war Daddy worked in a munitions factory, I think. Do you remember those shells that they had, squashed, for an ash tray and a vase? Mabel and Fritz were married in 1917 but they lived with Moms parents because they needed Mabels help! All Mom's brothers did very well and the family lived between Hamilton and Stoney Creek and were always close. They loved to get together for a game. Grandpa Coleman had a farm at Stoney Creek, south side of King Street, and his vineyards ran up into the mountain. Your Mom and I spent a month or so helping with the picking every summer, as they grew strawberries, raspberries red and black currants, gooseberries, peaches, plums, pears, etc. and sold them to E. D. Smith jam people. Grandpa used to also bring extra to Moms house on Cameron Ave. (123) when I was smaller, and I went door to door selling them for them. It wasn't hard work because people were pleased to get fresh fruit. I have always been less shy than your Mom, though I must say she seems to have blossomed forth of late. She used to 'put me up' to the things she wouldn't do! We lived on Cameron until about 1935, then moved to Tuxedo to live next door to Aunty Pearce, who then lived at 26. After she died we bought her house and lived at 26 Tuxedo N., Hamilton, as you recall. Did you ever hear about 'the Buffalo folk'? They used to come to visit Aunty Pearce and after she died they came to Moms for years. They were Aunty Pearce's niece and nephew (two cuouples). Believe it or not, twice when we've been in England we've visited Aunty Pearce's great niece and family! Aunt Jess (Buffalo) gave us the info when we went in 1975 and we've kept in touch. They are distant relatives, to say the least. She is still teaching piano at over 80 yrs. of age. Apparently Mary Leavins, the Eng. niece, came to Buffalo once to visit her Aunt Jess, and they drove her to N. Falls and Hamilton, and she remembers Mom and Dad! Arch Pearce was her cousin.

Trust this helps to round out the information for your adventure.

Marion