

## THE MURRAY GIRLS ABROAD

When Grandma Murray brought the children to the Canadian prairies in 1890, George was twelve and Agnes seven or eight. In 1934 two daughters of Grandma's sister, Isabel Imlay living in Oregon, had spent several months in Scotland and wrote to the Murrays about their visit. During the 1940's George and Agnes discussed making a similar trip. After the war had ended they decided to travel to Scotland in 1950.

Unfortunately, George contracted cancer and died in October of 1949. So Agnes approached her sister Nell, my Mother, who initially refused. However, Dad finally persuaded her to make the trip. So toward the end of June 1950 the two sisters took the train to Montreal, spent a night there, and set off June 28 aboard the R. M. S. "Ascania" of the Cunard White Star Line. As they approached Liverpool, Mother began to send pairs of letters - one to Dad in Winnipeg and one to me in Evanston, Illinois. The letters are similar but not identical as she responded to some of our comments. What follows is a series of quotes taken from her letters.

Aboard R. M. S. Ascania, July 4 - "Well here I am almost across the ocean from my dear ones....we have had a very calm sea although we are taking the northern route. They claim we will run into choppy seas tomorrow when we run down between Ireland and Scotland. So far no pills and have been quite well. Some have been ill."

Aberdeen, July 8 - "We got through the Customs at Liverpool with no trouble, and I was whisked onto the train to Scotland before I knew where I was by a very efficient guard who insisted on calling me 'ma luv.' Agnes finally got scrambled on with me and we were off....We found we had to change at Carlisle...and went on to Perth where we had to wait for three hours. We were finally put on a train for Aberdeen...By this time we were so befuddled and demented we were willing to hand over everything to anyone who could sort it out.

...we arrived in Aberdeen at 3.20 AM. Found Jessie Ritchie and her two daughters, also Agnes Thomson and her daughter at the station. We all got into a taxi and arrived at the Norton....quite close to where the Ritchies live. At 12.30 [the next day] Hylda and Kathleen Ritchie called for us and we went there for lunch. From there we were walked and bussed all over Aberdeen. Returned to the Ritchies and had tea or supper.

Today we have been put in the best room in the hotel - 6 pounds, 5 shillings a week. Very old fashioned in their furnishings. Well, we are certainly having some time here. Auntie and I are simply useless with laughter at the drop of a hat. [The Ritchies] have a self-contained house which is in a long terrace of granite houses, and which they own. Very old fashioned as compared to our houses but very substantial and very clean and beautifully kept. It is a city of granite and cobblestones, two decker trams and busses. Saw Balgownie House (like a small castle) where James Thomson was head gardener."

Aberdeen, July 10 - "This is Monday, and also Grandpa Murray's 100th birthday. Strange to think that 100 years after we are here in the granite city. Sunday we met Jessie Ritchie...and mounted to the top deck of a lovely new tram. Jessie pointed out places of interest including the very fine home of Charles Murray...We went out to Hazelhead Park and walked through the grounds...[later] The Thomsons walked us all over the west end of Aberdeen and up onto a hill overlooking the city....In the distance the lighthouse and the sea stretching to the horizon.

Auntie had a cable yesterday that Bob and Hilda had a little son [Ian]... The streets are filled with lovely rosy-cheeked lads and lassies...the little boys dressed in kilts".

Aberdeen, July 13 - "Tuesday evening we went to His Majesty's Theatre and saw 'Off the Record'. Very good. They smoke and eat ice cream dixies during the show. This I did not care much for....a long day spent on a bus tour to Fraserburgh. Here we tramped the streets of an old grey city....went to see the people who lived in Red House some few years ago, only to find it was the day of their Mother's funeral....

Then on a bus to Rathen where we were caught in a deluge of rain. Up a pretty (winding) road to Red House. This is really a large rambling farmstead badly in need of repair. It must have been a lovely farm in its day. We were allowed into the house and saw where Grandpa Murray had spent the early part of his life. No wonder he longed to return! There is what once must have been a beautiful rose garden at the front door, overlooking a beautiful stretch of rolling farm land. We went up the ground at the back and saw the little cottar's cottage where Mother and Father lived...Down below lies the farm and other buildings, on the right (a stone's throw) the school surrounded by a stone dyke, the old church and graveyard and church manse.

In the distance you can see the Hill of Mormon, on the side of which is outlined in white stones a deer. On the other side is a horse. We were told that Grandpa Murray wrote the names of the family on paper, put it in a bottle and buried the bottle under one of the deer's horns (?) "...met Jessie at 5.30 and went to Ruth [Murray] Hall's... Her husband is a retired sea captain."

Aberdeen, July 17 - "Saturday we took the bus to Peterhead. From there we took a taxi accompanied by an old school friend of Auntie's...The taxi driver was some character! He was fat, poured into a heavy suit two sizes too small and wore a bowler. He panted and grunted most of the way but was a good driver. We went to Glendaveney and saw the little house where our family lived before going to Canada. It is still a lovely little cottage with roses all about. The same gates, walks, etc. remained...Saw through the little school-house by the present master...Then down the little road to the station where Grandma and Grandpa had left from. Yesterday we went to a second cousin - the Stewarts, for tea...Heard more of our connections, etc. We are now in a complete fog as to who is who...The food here is nothing to write home about. Too watery to suit us. We surely are lucky to live where we do. They have scenery and buildings here, but none of the comforts of life as we know them." [They had now been joined by Agnes Vanderlip and Margaret Imlay from Oregon.]

Aberdeen, July 20 - "Yesterday we had a motor ride out to Braemar...We passed along the side of the river Dee and at Feughside saw the salmon jumping. We also saw Balmoral castle, Lord Tweedsmuir's residence, etc. Passed through Ballater where Uncle Willie Murray was schoolmaster...Our connections on the Murray side are terrific talkers and arguers, so sometimes we miss out on information."

Aberdeen, July 24 - "Friday we had a real day. Four of us [Imlays] caught the bus...got off at Mintlaw where Grandpa Thom lived before he died...visited Miss Farquhar who had known him. She pointed out the house. We were over and all around the old house. He was upstairs and had a gable window.

From there we took the bus to Longside. Found Grandma and Grandpa Thom's grave...Hired a taxi which took us [to] Lumbs where Mother lived before she was married. Went to Hythe where Grandma Wallace lived before marriage...Beautiful countryside. Four hours taxiing cost us each 10 shillings and 1 s. tip. Caught a bus back to Mintlaw and on to Aberdeen....

Are having Cook's make up our itinerary for the rest of our tour...There are no luxuries here - it is almost impossible to get canned fruit, good meat and proper milk. Butter, meat and tea are still rationed. Yesterday we went to church at old St Machar's. The elder who ushered us in had been at the Dominion Bank in Winnipeg...and had quite a talk...They took up the collection in pouches. No clinking!"

Aberdeen, July 24 - "Today we went down to Nellfield graveyard to look for Grandpa Murray's grave, but did not find it. This afternoon Jessie Foot (cousin Agnes Thomson's daughter) took us through Marishal College. She and I climbed up to the top of the tower and viewed the city. Quite a sight."

Aberdeen, July 28 - "We spent a glorious day Tuesday around the grounds of Balmoral castle, Craithie Church, etc. It is superb scenery everywhere....They are poor cooks here. Of course they do not have much variety, and are still rationed. They do have lovely fish, but the only meat we have had is minced steak, stewed steak and a poor quality of roast beef. Also Spam and terrible sausages. There is little variety in the stores."

Glasgow, August 1 - "Here we are in Glasgow! We arrived yesterday at 1.40 PM and took a taxi up from the station...Had a hot bath last night after walking around the city all afternoon and taking in a vaudeville show at the Empire. It was a very good show. This AM...to the bus station and took a tour to Loch Lomond and the Trossachs. Loch Lomond was nestled in a valley surrounded by great heather covered hills. It is rugged yet lovely country and the loch is a huge body of water. At one side rises Ben Lomond... We had lunch at Callendar (punk) and tea at Helensburgh (worse)...

This is a terrific city of dirty black buildings. Of course they are mostly old and, too, this is a smoky city. They have lovely shops but are very expensive...Tomorrow we are going to visit cousin Dolly (Murray) Pirie at Helensburgh. She is down there on holiday."

Belfast, August 5 - "Believe it or not here we are in Belfast...We sailed around 9 PM. What a sight! All those mighty ships under construction...While in Glasgow we were out to see the Piries who were holidaying at Helensburgh. I got quite a shock when their son Ian walked into view as he could have been your [i.e. HJA] brother...Strange isn't it? He is a grand chap - 24 - and a graduate engineer. The younger brother David is 14. They took us on a drive up to Luss, a village on the shore of Loch Lomond. Boy, could John

Pirie (the dad) drive! That little car just zoomed around hairpins and up and down the hills..

In Belfast it has been dull and raining since we arrived... Took the bus out to Ballymena and met John Stevenson, a delightful elderly gentleman who insisted on taking us out to tea. Also met Bob Stevenson's (Swift Current) mother and sister [related to Billy Stevenson, Aunt Jessie's late husband] ...Last night the lads were having a wild time around here. They shouted most of the night. As the policeman who found our way for us when we returned from Ballymena said: 'They're a bit light in the head.' We are to go back there tomorrow, when they will motor us around that country."

London, August 9 - "Well, after spending four days (rain every day but one) in Ireland, we sailed on the 'Royal Scot' back to Glasgow...then down to the train for London. We had beautifully comfortable compartments on the train, but did not sleep very well. Now we are ensconced in this DUMP! We are not in the best hotels, certainly not what we are accustomed to, and find the places old and musty."

Paris, August 13 - "Agnes and I had a great two days around London. It really is a wonderful place to see...We went right out, climbed on a bus and were out on the streets in Piccadilly Circus - lost! Pounced upon the first Bobby we saw, got directions and proceeded on our way. We went to Cook's first and got our trip fixed up...Had lunch in Harrods and went on our way to see some of the shops...and find our way to the BBC. The program was...very entertaining. Came out and had a sandwich and started for home. Got lost three or four times but finally reached the Hilton House...

Next day we were out bright and early and dodged about until we found Buckingham Palace. Walked all around and saw the changing of the guard, the massive fountain in front of the Palace. Walked around St James Park to Westminster Abbey...we had lunch where we could look out the window at big ben and the river Thames. We then proceeded to the Tower of London...we were all through it - seeing the crown jewels, the Bloody Tower where Sir Walter Raleigh walked while in prison...[and wrote] the history of the world... We fought our way back to the Hilton House after staggering around in the wrong direction for what seemed miles...

Saturday morning we went down to Victoria Station and entrained for Newhaven, then onto a boat for Dieppe, and then onto a train for Paris. It certainly was

nerve-wracking. But we arrived here, have a lovely room and gorgeous meals. This is the nicest place we have stayed at yet...Sunday we had breakfast and walked down rue de la Madeleine to Cooks where we got tickets to two tours today.

First we went around the city and saw the Place de la Concorde, Arc de Triomphe, Eiffel Tower...[and all the usual places]...It would take a week to go through the art galleries properly, but we did see Mona Lisa, some of Rubens, Van Dyck, da Vinci, etc. Also saw Winged Victory and Venus de Milo. Back for lunch. In the afternoon we went to Versailles, and were taken all through the palace. Boy what a place! The murals are beyond words as well as the statuary...Then out to the facade. The gardens are simply beautiful... Unfortunately the fountains were not on today..."

London, August 16 - "Monday evening we went to the Casino de Paris. It was about ten minutes walk from the St. Petersburg Hotel on Caumartin (rue) where we stayed...we proudly pranced down to the Casino, waited in line until the doors were opened, and were ushered to our seats by a madam in a black frock with a huge white organdy bow fluttering off one shoulder. As we proceeded to seat ourselves, she asked for something. Being slightly dumb we could not understand. However, what she was demanding was a 'service tip' in very decided tones. Then the curtain went up on one of the most spectacular musical reviews I have ever seen. The gowns and settings were a riot of color and glitter. Most of the chorus had nothing on but a fig leaf! Were our faces red!. As the show went on we were in misery. We were scared to death of what would happen next. I suggested to Auntie that perhaps the place would be raided.

Anyway we got up at the intermission and thought we would go out. But! the doorlady had the door barred and refused to allow anyone out...However a man clapped his hand to his head and made like he was sick. She let him out and we pushed after he and his wife. We never paused for a moment but down the street and back to the hotel. Once inside our room, we laughed until we were sick...Of course the people here don't think anything of this sort of thing. They have places to relieve yourself right on the street...

Well, Tuesday we went to Fontainebleau...the palace...was a wonderful sight of glittering gold, murals, frescos, etc...we saw Nappie's bedroom and bed, also Marie Antoinette's boudoir...The grounds were also very beautifully laid out...

Arrived here [London] after a very rough crossing. We were both a little wobbly and Agnes 'frowed up' on the floor. My gorge rose frequently but I managed to carry on. We had nothing to eat from early morning until about 3 PM. Maybe just as well...The Imlays are to be here several days too."

London, August 20 - "Thursday we had our hair done...to Cook's and got tickets for Covent Garden to the Sadlers Wells Ballet... to the art gallery [National Gallery?]. ...raining, into a newsreel theatre...had supper...home to bed.

Friday we went to Kew Gardens and had tea. What a beautiful park! Miles and miles of treed walks, flowers, pools, etc. In the evening we went to James (Dr) Murray's for dinner...He reminds me very much of Earle Roden. She is, I imagine, an English-woman. Very nice, but never still - smoking, pouring drinks or coffee, rushing around with a silver fox cape (the house was none too warm). They have a very nice son John who is studying to be a C. A...is 24 years old...John drove us back.

Saturday we went down Regent St. to Austin Reed's, a very large and select mens' outfitters and saw Charlie Halliday (his mother was father's sister Harriet). He just recently lost his wife and has been quite ill. A very nice chap around 60 yrs ...bought 2 peaches and 2 pears, 2 jam-busters and went to St James Park and ate them in front of a beautiful pool full of wild bird life and weeping birch and willow drooping into the pool...Walked around and found Clarence House. Here we found a crowd waiting, so we waited and saw a station wagon with Prince Charles and his nanny sitting in the front seat. Little Charles had his hand waved by his nanny at the gaping public.

From there we went to St Paul's Cathedral. They had a service while we were there and heard some nice singing. Visited Madame Tussaud's. It is well worth seeing. Then went into Regent's Park for outdoor tea and saw Queen Mary's rose garden..."

London, August 23 - "There is not really enough time to see everything. We dash from one place to another and it is surprising what we run into by accident. Saw a monument of Lord Clive of India. Also one of Sir Henry Havelock whom Grandma Anderson claimed was related to the McIntyres."

London, August 26 - "Last night we met cousin Charlie Halliday (Aunt Harriett Murray's son) and he took us to Lyons Corner House for a Russian (music) dinner. It is a huge restaurant - five floors devoted entirely to eating. He travelled practically all over the

world for Lever Bros. He lived for 11 1/2 years in Russia and speaks the language beautifully. He is a linguist as also is his daughter Naomi. She is an interpreter for the govt. here. Speaks 7 or 8 languages. Most interesting evening. He looks very, very much like our George."

London, August 29 - "Saturday we went to Hounslow (suburb) and were met at the station by a stout good-natured, reddish-haired man who proved to be our second cousin on Grandpa Murray's side, Sydney Gibb. He had his 14-year old daughter with him... He has quite an establishment...buildings that cover quite a big piece of land, and is in business with his brother. They are agents for Austin, also make steel trucks for farmers for livestock. Have agency for Massey-Harris, I.H.C., etc...Took us on a drive to Richmond Hill, Windsor Castle, Hampton Court, and past London airport which is expanding at a terrific rate...We also saw Eton boys school...

Sunday we went out to East Croydon and visited the Foots. Nice place, no car, so we had a beautiful walk through the woods... Yesterday we went on a tour of Oxford... a good sized city with terribly old buildings...Toured around the city, saw inside Magdalene College, Christ Church College or house [The House] with 'Old Tom' (bell) over the gate, New College (the oldest of all)...It is simply a walled city of dark, narrow, dirty old buildings of great historical interest....At night cousin Charlie Halliday came over here with daughter Naomi (born in Russia). She is an interpreter for the govt. here. Very nice..."

Edinburgh, September 2 - "Arrived here Thursday AM after a pleasant night on the train from London. Here if you buy a first- class birth you get a fully equipped compartment...We went on two tours of the city Thursday and were so tired we had to go to bed around 8 PM....places you read so much about in the early days - home of John Knox, heart of Midlothian, where Robbie Burns spent much of his time, St Giles church, Holyrood[house] palace, Scott monument, King Arthur's seat...Princes Street gardens, floral clock... on to the military tattoo at the castle (Edinburgh). What a sight!...we had s.r.o. tickets but got a seat in the front row right beside the box where the salute was taken...walked steadily through the deserted streets of Edinburgh - lost as usual. However it seems to be half our fun...

Today we went on a tour of Abbotsford...The purple hills, green fields, trees, old bridges, flowers, the Tweed river, Abbotsford, Melrose Abbey, Dryburgh Abbey, the



Pentland Hills..."

Edinburgh, September 5 - "Yesterday we went through Edinburgh castle and poked about. In the evening amid pouring rain we tottered over to the Assembly Hall and saw 'Bartholomew Fair'. Well it was no doubt well acted but we could scarcely make out a word they said...Today we have just returned from a tour of the Burns country - Ayr...plenty of Rowan trees [Mountain Ash] loaded with clusters of red berries, the Clyde winding its way at the bottom of the Tweedsmuir and Rowther hills which were covered with purple heather. Burns monument in Ayr is set on the river bank and is surrounded by a most beautiful park...Saw and entered his old home...also saw where Highland Mary lived."

Aberdeen, September 11 - "It has rained here practically ever since we arrived also it is quite cool. The houses being warmed only by fireplaces are really cold around the edges. They put two hot 'pigs' in our bed each night, which helps a little...We still have to visit Charlie Murray's here and are also going out to Rathen and district once more before leaving.

We left the Imlays in London and have a card this AM... They sail on the 18th. They couldn't keep up with us in our galloping about...I at least have lost weight walking about so much. Agnes thinks she has too."

Aberdeen, September 16 - "Well today we bussed over to Peterhead, hired a taxi and motored back around Glendaveney for the last time. I feel very sad to think that most likely my feet would never again traverse the places where George and the girls had played and where Mother and Father had spent a good 'whiley'... caught the bus to Fraserburgh. We stayed at the hotel there all night. There was a raging gale all night and until 10 AM today. Then it blew out to sea and, boy, it was cold.

However the manager of the hotel who was going out in the country to locate eggs, drove us up to the church at Rathen... presently a gentleman stepped up from behind and asked us to step up on the platform. We tried to demur but it turned out that the whole congregation, which consisted of four others, all sat up there and the minister gave out with his sermon. Now we are back at the Belvedere for a short time before going to Jessie Ritchie's for tea.

Thursday we went up to Charlie Murray's for the evening. They were away when we were here before. He is rather a snob. Sold his business [a book store] for 40,000 pounds and is now retired. He showed us some doll's furniture he had made for the childrens' home and it was very well done. This is his hobby, also gardening."

Aberdeen, September 19 - "Yesterday morning we went to Ellon to visit Mrs. Margaret Stevens and Miss Jemima Wallace (cousins of Mother's). They are two very genteel ladies and keep everything spotless...we went down to the church (for which they had gotten the key) and we went in and saw the plaque on the wall in memory of Dr. James Robertson (Father's uncle)...Today we tie up loose ends. Get our tickets for Liverpool, pack, and go to Ruth Hall's for tea. Tomorrow we leave on the 1.15 PM train for Glasgow... We'll both be glad when we are safely on the boat. Will let you know what the plan is as soon as we get to Quebec... Your [HJA's] description of the pork chop was, to say the least, like waving a red flag in front of the proverbial bull. The meat situation is very poor here - mainly fish, stewed meat, or minced steak...Occasionally a good piece of ham brought in from Denmark."

Liverpool, September 20 - "Started to write this on the train but it jiggled too much...Ruth and Ernest Hall, Jessie Ritchie and Hylda and Kathleen were at the station to see us off. It was a lovely day as we pulled out and passed through the beautiful countryside of Perthshire..."

On arrival at Glasgow we were taken by car out to the Bridge of Weir where we saw the complete village of homes called The Scottish Orphans' Home, founded by one Quarrier who was [a Winnipeg friend's] grandfather about 150 years ago...we went into the church and saw...about 900 children varying in age from 4 - 16...When they sang to the accompaniment of a pipe organ...they just about raised the roof. ...down to the station where John and Dolly (Murray) Pirie had driven in from Coatbridge to see us off. We arrived here [Liverpool] at 6.40 AM and were met by a man from Cook's who is putting our baggage in the Customs sheds."

Aboard the RMS Franconia, September 27 - "We got on the boat..last Thursday AM, but as the sea was very rough we did not set sail until Friday 9.30 AM...owing to severe gales...A great many of the passengers were sea sick - pills and all! Yours truly took no pills and never missed a meal. The meals are very good and it would be a shame to miss them...Agnes took one or two pills, but she wasn't sick either...our boat is docking one

day late, also missing connections in Montreal. So goodness knows when we will get to Quyon. Expect to stay there a couple of days, so should be home the middle of next week...We are sailing past Belle Isle at the present moment...and coming into sight of Labrador. The sea is lovely today and the sun is shining. It is, however, quite cold."

The sisters arrived back in Winnipeg on October 6, 1950. During my postdoctoral year at Oxford I was able to visit many of these people and places. Mother and Dad made several trips to Scotland from 1959 onward.