

19. CARTER

English-born Carters would hardly be considered candidates for the German-speaking Amish Mennonite community in Canada. But that is what happened to Harold Carter, born in 1898 in London, England. (1) (See Notes below) In keeping with Anglican tradition, Harold was baptized as an infant. Harold was the fifth child, and when he was only a year old, his mother died tuberculosis. His father then remarried, but the step-mother was unkind to his children. Harold's father died in December of 1904, also of tuberculosis. Almost immediately, his step-mother placed Harold and his sisters in the Barnardo Orphanage in London, England.

It was customary at that time for the British to send orphans or abandoned children to Canada to families who had no children of their own or who could use their help, especially on farms. These Canadian families would take them in and give them a home. Among the best known philanthropists in the transport of children to Canada were Dr. and Mrs. Barnardo. After some time in this London orphanage, six-year-old Harold and three of his older sisters, along with 160 other orphans and homeless children, boarded the *S. S. Bavarian* and sailed for Canada. Besides the sailor suit which he wore for the voyage, his clothing and other earthly possessions were placed in a little wooden chest, which the family has yet today.

After three weeks on the Atlantic Ocean, on May 13, 1905, they landed in Montreal. Because one of the sisters was ill, all the siblings were put into quarantine. After she recovered, Harold and his sisters traveled by train to Stratford, Ontario where they entered the Annie MacPherson House, a temporary home, known as an "orphanage." (2)

After almost nine months in the Stratford orphanage, on Feb. 17, 1906, Harold was chosen by a stranger. Harold told his children, "I really stared at this man because I'd never seen an Amish man before." The stranger with a bushy beard and austere clothing was thirty four year old Daniel S. Jantzi (24 Mar 1871-24 Jul 1952) from Topping, Ontario. The moment of his choosing was burned into his memory. Harold said, "He walked up and down the rows. He stopped and looked at me, but continued to the end of the row. Then he came back, pointed at me and said, "I'll take this one."



From England to Canada - Harold Carter's trunk. The dimensions of the trunk are 12½ high X 12½ wide X 23½ inches long. The trunk is presently in the care of a granddaughter.

Credit: Mary Carter

Daniel S. Jantzi and his wife Fannie Kuepfer of Mornington Township were married in 1898 -- the same year Harold Carter was born -- but had no children. Many "Home Children" suffered exploitation in rural Ontario where they were taken in by farmers who used them as cheap labour. This was not Harold's experience—for the Jantzis provided him not only with the necessities of life, but with love and the sense of belonging. Harold told his children, "She was like a Mom to me." Like his father, Joseph G. Jantzi, before him, Daniel S. Jantzi was a deacon in the Old Order Amish Church and young Harold was immersed in the language, religion, and culture of his adoptive community.

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Fannie died in 1914, and Dan remarried to Katie Kuepfer in 1915. Evidently, Harold didn't get along as well with Katie as he had with Fannie and left the following year. He remained in the Amish community, and was baptized in the Old Order Amish Church at age 18.

In 1919, Harold married Christina Kuepfer, daughter of Solomon and Catherine (Zehr) Kuepfer. The groom was 21 years old and the bride was 26.

Evidently, there was communication between Harold and his sisters. It is said that his sisters were disappointed that he stayed with these German-speaking Amish. Although his sisters' remarks were upsetting at the time, decades later his sisters apologized for their remarks and acknowledged that Harold and Christina had created a loving, stable home and were enjoying a blessed life in a caring community. They even noted that, he alone of all their siblings, owned his own house and property.

Not only did Harold remain Old Order Amish, but became a valued member of the community. As an indication of the respect which Harold had in his church community, he was more than once nominated for ordination, but was never chosen. In addition to farming, Harold developed skills as a carpenter and served as "the Boss" at barn raisings. He directed the raising of 34 barns plus sheds and houses, mostly in the Milverton area but also from Palmerston to Tavistock.

Harold Carter served as chairman of the Fire and Storm Aid Union board at least three times during the 1950s and 1960s. (3) The Amish Mennonite Fire and Storm Aid Union is an organized form of co-operation, creating a unique setting for the practice of mutual sharing and burden bearing." The Old Order Amish, Beachy Amish Mennonites, the Conservative Mennonites, Fellowship Mennonites and progressive Mennonite congregations of Amish Mennonite heritage, all work together to practice mutual aid in the face of fire and storm losses among their members. One time tensions arose in the Aid Union when the Amish Mennonite congregations sought coverage for their increasingly elaborate meetinghouses. When it appeared that the majority would vote down the inclusion of meetinghouses, historian Orland Gingerich says, "Harold Carter, himself an Old Order member, remarked that since they meet in homes and barns, which are insured, he thought it only fair that meeting houses (church buildings) also be insured."

In 1945, some members of the Old Order Amish Church pushed for the acceptance of tractors in their farming. In addition, there were tensions about church members who had moved beyond farming to operate businesses and heavy machinery. The Carter family joined the new group, called the Steckly District, which was formed at this time. The Steckly congregation continued to worship in homes, retained horse and buggy for travel and followed traditional Old Order Amish worship patterns, but allowed other changes – public electricity, telephones, cars, a meeting-house, and English as the language of worship.



50th Wedding Anniversary Celebration - Harold and Christina Carter seated. Children standing Left to Right - Bishop William Carter, Emanuel Carter, Ruth (Carter) Steckley, Joe Carter and LeRoy Carter.

Credit: Mary Carter

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Harold's son, William, was ordained as Minister (1959) and then Bishop (1964) of the Steckly District—thereafter named the Carter District. LeRoy was ordained a Deacon (1984) in the same congregation. In 1987 the Carter congregation built a meetinghouse and took the name Morningview Amish Mennonite Church.

Harold and Christina Carter had 4 sons, William, Emmanuel, Joseph, Leroy, and one daughter, Ruth. They were blessed with 23 grandchildren. After 33 years of farming and building barns and houses for others, Harold and Christina sold their farm to their youngest son and built a retirement home for themselves 1 km away on the farm of their oldest son, William and his wife, Clara. On Oct. 26, 1972 Harold died at the age of 74 years. Christina died on April 9, 1981. They are buried in the Edgcombe Amish Cemetery, west of Newton, Ontario.

In contrast to the losses and deprivation of his early life in England, Harold finished his course in comfort and contentment. Throughout his life, he expressed a strong faith in God. From being a lonely orphan, he became the patriarch of a large, caring family and a respected member of his adopted church and community. Harold Carter left a legacy of leadership in barn raisings, mutual aid and resilience in the face of hardship.

THE CARTER FAMILY

*The information on the Carter family -- as recorded by Nancy (Jantzi) Kuepfer is as follows:
Additional data supplied by Fred Lichti*

WILLIAM HENRY CARTER, b. ca.1876; d. 1904, London, England

1st wife: Julia Ann Butcher, b. ca.1876, d. 1899

2nd wife: name not known

Children and Grandchildren:

1. Florence Carter – when her younger siblings sailed to Canada, she had already been hired out to work for a London family. She was not free to travel with her siblings, and all contact with Florence was lost.
2. Helena Magdalena Carter, b. June 22, 1892, London, England
 - d. Sept, 1959
 - m. Dec 14, 1918John H. Millard, b. Apr 18, 1888; d. Sept 1959
Port Huron, Michigan
Children:
 - a. William Millard, Mount Clemens, MI
 - b. Eva Millard, m. Edward Cline, Detroit, MI
 - c. Florence Millard, m. Meland Marcetec, Chelsea, MI
 - d. Nellie Frances Millard, m. Raymond Stein
 - 2m. Rayond Kiser, Port Huron, MI
 - e. James Millard, Port Huron, MI
 - f. Winnifred Millard, m. Fred Hands, Port Huron, MI
 - g. Mary Ellen Millard, m. William Cay, Detroit, MI

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3. Miriam Ethel Carter, b. Apr 3, 1895, London, England

d. Apr 9, 1963 (blind for 30 years)

m. James Keely, b. 1895

Galt, Ontario

Children;

a. Jane Keely, m. C.G. Hicks, Strathroy, ON

b. Eva Keely, m. Gordon Woodham, St. Anns?

c. Ruth Keely, m. Robert Martin

d. Leslie Keely, m. _____ d. in Braton?

e. Patricia Keely, m. John Jones, Preston

son Peter Jones

4. Dorothy Julia Carter, b. May 12, 1896, London, England

d. Oct 1921, London, Ontario

5. **HAROLD WILLIAM CARTER** (4), b. May 28, 1898, St. Mary's Paddington, London, England

d. Oct 26, 1972, Newton, Ontario

m. Nov 25, 1919,

Christina Kuepfer, b. Aug 14, 1893

R.R.1, Newton, Ontario

Children:

a. William Harold Carter, b. Dec 10, 1920; d.

(Ordained in the Amish Church: minister May 17, 1959, bishop Oct. 11, 1964

Today the church is called Morningview Amish Mennonite Church)

m. Nov. 4, 1947

Clara Kuepfer, b. July 21, 1928

Newton, Ont.

b. Emanuel Carter, b. Oct 29, 1924; d.

m. Sept 16, 1948

Laura Kuepfer, b. June 15, 1922; d.

Newton, Ont,

c. Ruth Dorothy Carter, b. Apr 13, 1932; d.

m. June 1, 1961

Ephriam Steckly, b. Feb 9, 1930

d. Joseph Henry Carter, b. Dec 8, 1934; d.

m. June 6, 1957

Catherine Kuepfer, b. Apr 18, 1937

e. Leroy Reuben Carter, b. May 1, 1940;

m. Oct 5, 1861

Clara Schmidt, b. May 6, 1940

Ordained Deacon in 1984 in the Amish Church

NOTES:

- 1) Lorraine's source of information is notes taken by Nancy, Mrs. Menno W. Kuepfer, of Millbank, Ontario, who, no doubt, acquired her information from the Carter family -- perhaps from Harold himself. Added to the text written by Lorraine, is information taken from a biography written by Fred Lichti, which had been published Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario newsletter.
- 2) A pictorial presentation "Barnardo Children in Canada," bearing the date 1924 is found in my Public Archives of Canada file.
- 3) "*135 Years of Amish Mennonite Fire and Storm Aid Union*," 2007, an updated version of "*This Is No Insurance Company*," 1996, by Catherine Schlegel, lists the persons who served as chairmen of the annual meetings of the company.
- 4) For Harold William Carter and his family, see the following genealogies:
 - a. Family History and Genealogy of John Jantzi and Elizabeth Gerber, by Mrs. Menno W. Kuepfer and Lorraine Roth, Millbank and Shakespeare, Ontario, 1974, pages 22-24, 101
 - b. Jacob and Maria (Lichti) Kuepfer Family History and Genealogy, by Mrs. Menno W. Kuepfer, Alvin N. Roth, and Lorraine Roth, Kitchener, Ontario, 1976, pages 22-24, 137, with various parts of the family on other pages.

Lorraine Roth
Tavistock, Ontario
August, 2009

~ Reformatted by Bruce W. Jantzi, 2019, then December 2020