

James Wilson Richardson

1882 - 1961



James Wilson Richardson was born on June 5th, 1882, in Hallville, Ontario. He practiced medicine and surgery in Calgary from 1911 to his retirement in 1972.

In his life story written for his children, he describes the house he grew up in Hallville as a small almost square (about 18 foot by 20 foot) unpainted two-story frame house with a lean-to on the back that was used as a woodshed. He writes that their farm was about 50 acres with about 20 acres cleared. Money was scarce and they had no saddle horses. His mother died when he was 2 years of age and his father remarried. Of the nine children in his family, only 5 survived to adulthood and of those, 4 became teachers. Education was highly valued by the family and Wilson decided at a young age to become a medical doctor. Wilson's summer jobs when he was a student were many and varied: he worked in a blacksmith shop, a cheese factory, as a carpenter, as a farm labourer, and as a seller of fruit trees. He was sent to High School in Kemptville at the age of 18 years where he roomed for \$1.50 per month. Following High School, he went for 3 months to Model School at Cornwall to become a teacher and he enjoyed his two and one-half years of teaching. His teaching pay was \$350.00 per year and he saved what he could for use in his first year at Medical School at McGill in 1906.

Wilson's first job as a Doctor out of McGill was in Grand Falls, Newfoundland, where he worked as a Doctor's assistant and received a wage of \$100 per month plus room and board. Luckily, he liked to travel and enjoyed the train ride to Sydney N.S., the overnight boat to Port Aux Basque, and the train to Grand Falls. He records a comment made by one of his patients in Grand Falls; *Hi have a pain in my kink-horn and I can't gluch.* (The translation was, "I have a sore throat and I can't swallow.")

After graduation, on June 10th, 1910, Dr. Richardson arrived in Calgary, Alberta, where his sister Sarah Storey, lived and where there were 12 practicing doctors. During his first week, he wrote council examinations and at Church, he met Dr. Lindsay (secretary of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta) who told him about a temporary job in Carmangay which he took.

In 1913, at a house party in Calgary, Elizabeth Ann Skinner caught his eye and they agreed to become engaged. However, they were not married until July 12th, 1917 because Wilson wanted to do postgraduate studies in Britain which he did and received an F.R.C.S. from Edinburgh. Before returning to practice in Calgary, he served with the Royal Army Medical Corps where he had command of an ambulance train and later, served as a surgical specialist.

In 1917, Elizabeth Ann and James travelled to Alaska for their honeymoon where they studied the Chilkoot (goldrush) Trail and Lake Bennett. More travels followed including a European trip with Catherine in 1957.

Dr. Richardson, M.D.C.M. (McGill), F.R.C.S. (Edinburgh), F.R.C.S. (Canada), F.A.C.S. (USA), practiced as a doctor and a surgeon. He was highly regarded both in Calgary and the Province and he was made a Senior Life Member of the Alberta Medical Association. Of him they said,

The sturdy virtues which distinguish this pioneer, the energy, the sincerity of purpose, high integrity, are component parts of Dr. Richardson's character, making him not only a most able and conscientious surgeon but also one of the most truly beloved men in Alberta.