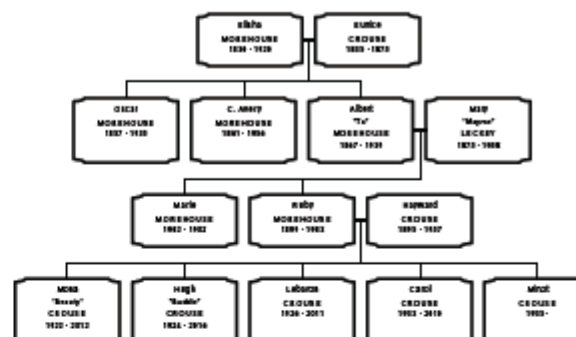


### MARY'S FAMILY

MARY ELEANOR LECKEY was born to parents Hugh and Debbie [*Hatfield*] Leckey from Chipman, NB. In 1884, her family moved to Devon, a small community on the north side of the Saint John River which has now been amalgamated into Fredericton.

They arrived just as a diphtheria epidemic was raging. One of the people that helped them during the epidemic was Oscar Morehouse from Upper Keswick who was working on a log boom in the Saint John River near Devon. At the same time, he was studying to become a doctor, so he helped with the diphtheria patients in the area. Oscar liked one of the Leckey girls but when he went to check on the family one afternoon, he learned that she had died from the disease.



By the time the epidemic was over, most of Mary's ten-member family had perished, and only Mary, her mother, and her brother, Reuben survived.

Oscar's father, Elisha suggested that Oscar bring the remaining family members to their Upper Keswick home. He thought they could give the remaining family a home in exchange for chores and housework. Such arrangements were common at the time.

So Mary, her mother, and Reuben moved in with Elisha Morehouse. Debbie and Elisha later married and built a three storey home for their blended family in Stone Ridge. They had a daughter Grace.

MARY PORTRAYS LIFE as it was in Burt's Corner and many rural New Brunswick and Canadian communities during the 1920s. People worked locally for each other or bartered for items they needed. Residents visited friends and neighbours daily, stopping for tea or a meal. Food was plentiful because it was raised or grown at home. These people created their own entertainment through games, musical performances, and dances at private homes. They attended barn raisings, quilting parties, band concerts, and church-related socials. There were many community groups such as the Women's Aid, a young girls' Women's Aid and the Independent Order of Foresters Lodge (Court Bright). The Temperance Movement for the prohibition or ban of alcohol had also started.

Most necessities were available at the local stores. People purchased or traded farm products with local merchants to get hardware items, tools, dishes, food, or cloth to make clothing.

Local services included blacksmiths, doctors, undertakers, shoe makers, clock builders, teachers, and wagon-repair people. With necessities close to home, the need to travel outside the settlement was minimal. Transportation was slow with the only means of travel being by foot, horse-power, or train. In the 1920s, cars were affordable for families such as doctors or merchants, but not for the average family until much later. The cars were heavy and did not navigate well in snow, so they were stored for the winter and replaced with the horse and sled. Doctors made house calls to attend sick residents, and everyone helped one another in time of need. Ladies tended to sick neighbours and assisted the local doctor with home care, baby deliveries, and preparing the deceased for burial. Likewise, men helped residents who suffered from illness or injury by helping to plant and harvest their crops or acting as a replacement in their business.

Communication from outside the community came through letter mail and arrived daily on the train. It was then sorted and distributed at

the railway station. In later years, the large mail bags were taken to a local store or home where a designated postmaster/mistress sorted and prepared mail for distribution by horse and wagon.

There was plenty of food preparation throughout the year to provide meals for winter. Without modern appliances, most food was canned so it wouldn't spoil.

The school Merle attended was a one-room building like many schools at the time. The teacher taught from grade 1 to grade 8 and all levels in between. The schoolhouse had a blackboard, a piano, and long wooden tables set up in rows with spaces for the children to write. Students learnt to strengthen their memory. They wrote their work on a slate with a slate pencil, and, because their slates were small, they had to remember their work as they erased and started their next task. When the older students finished their work, they helped the younger children. Keener children hurried to finish their work so they could listen to the work for the next grade level. There were no school buses so children walked several miles to school. If the majority of children never arrived due to the long walk in the extreme cold, the teacher cancelled school. School was also closed if the teacher was too sick to teach.

In a railway community like Mary's, everyone made use of the railway bed. It had to be plowed for the trains to travel, so students used it to walk to school if they attended the Pugh's Crossing School east of the community. Everyone used the railway tracks to travel back and forth to visit friends and relatives when the main roadway was too full of snow, but they kept an eye out for the trains scheduled to pass through the area.

There are also discussions of elections and Mary and Mona going to the hall to vote. Women obtained the right to vote in Dominion elections on May 24, 1918. By April 17, 1919, they were able to vote in New Brunswick elections. Both Mary and her daughter Mona seem to have taken these rights seriously because there are many mentions of going to the hall to vote, and Mona often functioned as a poll clerk.

## 1920

Thursday, January 1 ☁ Mr. Elisha Morehouse, *[Mary's stepfather and Albert's father]* died today about noon. Grace is coming home tonight. Rilla Crouse and Miss Hull were here to dinner and supper. Ruby and Merle went to Zealand to meet Grace on the train. Weather — snow.

Friday, January 2 ☁ Mr. Morehouse was buried today. Howard Burt drove us up *[to the funeral on the sleigh]*. Weather cold, clear and windy. Mr. Spencer had charge of the funeral; assisted by Mr. *[Beverly]* Lawrence *[undertaker]*. Beautiful, moonlight evening. Maud's baby *[Rupert]* is five weeks old tonight.

Saturday, January 3 ☁ Weather very cold; the coldest morning this winter. Grace has gone home this morning. Professor Cadwallader *[?]* was here to tea and tuned the piano. Hayward Crouse was here this evening.

Sunday, January 4 ☁ Weather still awfully cold. No one has been to

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church from our family. Ruby has spent evening at Wardlow Bird's. I walked nearly to corner *[Burt's Corner]* with Merle when he went for milk. *[They got milk from several farmers.]* Beautiful, moonlight night.

Wednesday, January 7 ☁ Weather much warmer; more like spring. I spent the day at D. Jewett's going by train to Zealand and attended W.A. *[Women's Aid]* at Mrs. Henry Burt's in the afternoon. Seven members attended. Albert has gone to Farmer's Union Meeting at Mouth of Keswick. Ruby's coat cloth came from Eaton's today. *[Mail order parcels came by train.]*

Friday, January 9 ☁ Weather colder again. Fannie Barton just took music lesson *[on the piano from Ruby]*. No more word from Grace. Merle is playing Jack Straws. Ruby is embroidering a towel. Merle started to go to scout meeting but couldn't find any boys to go with. Patched my blankets today, a job I've been dreading.

Sunday, January 11 ☁ Merle and Ruby have gone to Sunday school and church. Weather is warm and snowing. Ruby has gone to church this evening again. Mr. Spencer gave her five dollars this morning; a gift from the W.A. for faithful services as organist.

Monday, January 12 ☁ We washed. It's snowing some. I have been up to Mr. Lovegrove's. He has been sick for two weeks. Mr. Spencer was there this morning to administer the sacrament. Mr. and Mrs. Spencer called here about dinner time. Ella Christie came after dinner to make Ruby's coat. Wind blowing this evening, drifting some. Merle spent evening at Howard Burt's playing games.

Wednesday, January 14 ☁ Cold and clear. Ella finished Ruby's coat tonight. Albert, Ruby and Merle have gone to a social. Randolph *[Maybe]* came for Ella. I drove up to the social with them *[in the sleigh]*. We had quite a gathering; made about nine dollars *[for Woman's Aid]*. The night is very cold and windy. So glad to get home.

Friday, January 16 ☁ Weather warmer. Not much snow fell; about half

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an inch. Our Eaton order has arrived. Willie Crouse had dinner here today. Nas [?] Palmer was here for a kettle to steep tea in. Today is Marie's birthday. She would have been eighteen years old. *[Marie was Mary's daughter who only lived six months.]*

Monday, January 19 ☁ Awfully cold, wind blowing and snow drifting. Didn't wash. I made Ruby an apron dress and most *[almost]* made another. Flour has taken another advance. It is now 17 dollars *[a barrel]* but two dollars cheaper in Farmers Union. We bought a bag of sugar tonight paying fourteen dollars *[50 lbs]*. Some price for sugar; expect it will advance again. Merle is studying and fretting. *[One of the local stores was called the Farmer's Store so they may have been getting a store discount or their membership in the United Farmer's Union, a political party that was growing across Canada at the time, may have entitled them to a discount.]*

Tuesday, January 20 ☁ Very cold. Burton Allen froze his hands driving from his home out to the station *[on sleigh]*. We washed today. The lumber is about all loaded. *[The railway siding and mill were next to the Morehouse home on the south side.]* Willie Gilby was hurt very badly today—kicked by a horse. Ruby had a card letter from Reuben. The Gleaner *[newspaper]* states today that flu is raging in Chicago. Hope it won't sweep the country again. *[She was referring to the Spanish flu epidemic that occurred after the soldiers returned from WWI in Europe.]* We have heard that one of Theora's children was run over by a team *[of horses]*. I supposed it is Arnold.

Wednesday, January 21 ☁ Snowing and blowing but warmer. Yesterday was a day of accidents. The Doctor's gas machine blew up and burned him very badly. *[This would be a type of laughing gas that was used for operations and dental procedures because the local doctor performed both types of service at his home office.]* One of Theora's children got his leg broken. We haven't heard which one. I have done quite a lot of sewing today. Had a letter from Reuben.

Thursday, January 22 ☁ Weather, very cold this morning but a beautiful afternoon. Albert was up to Doctor's. Things certainly were tossed about by the gas machine exploding. It was only a flying story *[gossip]* about one of Theora's children being hurt. Willie Gilby is hurt very badly alright. Rilla Crouse was here for a music lesson and brought some cucumber pickles, which is a treat. Pearl Tomilson was here for a lesson also.

Sunday, January 25 ☁ Mr. Spencer was at the station to meet the Bishop. It's been a very cold day. We had two lovely services in the evening. The Bishop spoke on the *Forward Movement*. *[This was a group from the Episcopal Church whose mission it was to energize the life of the church.]* I drove home with Ruby and Hayward. Merle came home before the service. Albert was up in the morning.

Wednesday, January 28 ☁ Fine and cold. Albert is staying with Willie Gilby again today *[because he had been kicked by the horse and hadn't recovered. Albert may have helped in Willy's Blacksmith shop.]* I was down to Mrs. Squire Fowlers this afternoon. Took the cost of *Forward Movement* literature down. Ruby has gone to a *Forward Movement* Meeting at the church.

Thursday, January 29 ☁ Very cold and windy. No one from our house attended the Methodist church it being so cold. It's some warmer since sun has gone down. Rilla was here for a lesson; also Pearl Tomilson. Our Eaton order arrived today and everything satisfactory. Ruby is pleased with the puff she sent for, and the towels. Have cut out a work dress for myself, did some sewing on it, and have made nearly a quarter yard of lace, plus knit a mitten wrist.

Friday, January 30 ☁ Snowed last night and blowed all day. Is blowing and drifting just fierce tonight. Very cold. I have nearly finished my dress. Must put more wood in stove and go to bed. Albert has worked today shovelling the switch *[for the railway next door]* and tallying *[lumber]* for loading car. They began hauling lumber from the new mill

at Cardigan yesterday.

**Saturday, January 31** ☁ The very coldest yet. All night was terrible and wind blew all night. I was so cold I couldn't sleep. *[At the time, there was no electricity for heating or furnaces, so their only source of heat was a wood stove.]* It's warmer tonight. Train was two hours late this morning. Hayward Crouse was here to dinner. He was walking to look over their section *[railway]*. He waited here to warm while the noon train went down. Started to use a new bag of flour today. Want to time it to see how long it will last. Albert has gone to *[Foresters] Lodge*. *[This was a Meeting House just west of the edge of the village. The Foresters was originally an organization that helped those in need; later it became a financial investment organization]*

**Tuesday, February 3** ☁ Warmer. Lovely sunshine; quite windy. Have finished my house dress; cut out another. Mr. and Mrs. Spencer have left their horse here and took train to Fredericton. I am going to quilting bee this afternoon. Have been to Edna's quilting and had such a nice pleasant time. We quilted one quilt and bound it, put another on frames and quilted one side. Five quilters were there. This is a lovely moonlight night; and not very cold.

**Friday, February 6** ☁ An awful storm on. Snowed and blew all night and all day. Awful drifts. Albert has worked shovelling for CPR today. This is Merle's Birthday. He is 12. He got two books, a dollar and seven chocolate bars. I have finished Merle's mittens.

**Saturday, February 7** ☁ Stormed all night with rain and sleet. The roads are drifted and a hard crust frozen. The road plow has been on the road. *[A large team of six to eight horses hauled the road plow.]* It snowed all day. Albert has been on the railway shovelling all day. Awfully hard work. Hayward Crouse has been in twice. Merle has done some shovelling and got very tired and cross. *[At 12 years, he also shovelled for the railway to earn money and help his family.]* It's blowing tonight again. Merle is just taking his bath. *[Saturday was bath night for most*

*people, so they were clean for church on Sunday.]*

**Monday, February 9** ☁ Warmer and snowing some. We washed. I collected some for Forward Movement. Called at three houses. Ruby has been up to the Doctor's *[her uncle]* this evening. I started but was afraid of meeting the train as the track is banked with snow. *[And she wouldn't have been able to step off the track to let the train pass. They travelled the railway tracks on foot because it was a shorter route than going around on the roadway through the village.]*

**Thursday, February 12** ☁ Sat up all night with Janie *[Jemte]*. *[She]* has slept all day yesterday and all night. A heavy sleep. Can't seem to hear, see or understand anything. Revived around 4 o'clock this morning. Knew us all but can't talk. Her tongue is thick, you can't understand her. Avery has given up all hope. I'm afraid Avery is taking the same disease. His tongue is coated and he is feeling poorly. I came down on the train this morning. The day has been very pleasant. I am going to bed as I am sleepy.

**Friday, February 12** ☁ A raw wind blowing today. Snow and blowing tonight. A carload of flour for the Farmer's Union has arrived today so it's been a busy day. *[Men were unloading the rail car.]* All sorts of men have been hauling. Have sold \$1600 worth today. We got two barrels of it. Willy Brewer brought us a barrel of potatoes today.

**Saturday, February 13** ☁ Both Albert and I were sick. Sent Merle up to doctor's for powders.

**Tuesday, February 16** ☁ We all put in a very bad night. The night was so terribly cold. Merle and I suffered a lot. Merle is worse. We sent for Doctor. *[The local doctor made house calls and provided patients with required medication. There was no pharmacy in rural areas.]* Hayward is carrying some wood for us. Hope Ruby doesn't take this disease. We would certainly be in a bad fix.

**Monday, February 23** ☁ A beautiful warm day. Mrs. Bubar called and