

William James Lutman

Born on March 17, 1885 William James Lutman^{*} was the eldest surviving son, his older brother having been born and died some fourteen years earlier in Bermuda.[†] By the time of his arrival in the family home on Wellington Street in London, Ontario the Lutman household was a full one with some seven older sisters ranging in age from two to nearly sixteen years of age. He would remain the youngest member of the family for more than three years. In the interim a major crisis threatened the family's well-being. The house in which William had been born was, in fact, growing about the infant and contractors spent the summer months building the large two-storey addition at the front. Toward the close of summer his father and one of the workers had a nasty spill from the scaffolding which left James Lutman with two fractured legs. Unable to walk his beat as a police constable, James was kept on the payroll until early in 1886 when it was determined he would never be able to resume his duties.[‡] William would have been oblivious to these trials, though his elder sisters were acutely aware of the troubles. Matters improved when James was hired by the City of London as a Relief Inspector. The difficulties may have had much to do with the fact that William was not displaced from his position as baby in the family until July 1888, with the birth of Margaret Emma.

William attended school at St. George's with his elder sisters, although for how long he attended school is unknown. Judging from his subsequent letters it seems unlikely that he went much beyond a basic elementary education. William was especially close to his older sister, Florence Josephine, who he and his two younger brothers, Jack and George, affectionately called "Freckle-Faced-Horsey-Nose." Family photograph albums from the early twentieth century show that there were innumerable gatherings and social visits. Much of the family's activities



William James Lutman. Courtesy of Jean Dunham.

^{*} William was known within the family as either Will or Bill. His nieces and nephews knew him best as "Uncle Bill".

[†] William James Lutman was probably named for both his maternal grandfather William Miller (circa 1810-1872) and his father James Bone Lutman (1845-1922). The name William was also a Lutman family name, however, and the child's paternal great-grandfather had been William Lutman (born 1785).

[‡] *James William Lutman* was christened at Chapter House on May 30, 1886 by Rev. G. Ballard. The Parish Register for St. John the Evangelist, London, Ontario, 1885-1894, p. 100.



William. Courtesy of Jean Dunham.

surrounded both their place of worship St. John the Evangelist's Anglican Church, that lay virtually across the street, and with St. George's Public School. There were excursions to Gibbon's Park, and even further afield and of course many an adventure to had in the family canoe. Legend has it that William, Jack and George laboured hard to build for themselves a canoe, which surviving photos seem to attest was popular amongst one and all within the family. For such a large family, there seems to have little pressure or impetus to leave the family fold and marry. While the eldest surviving sibling, Frankie, was the first to marry, she did not do so until 1908 when she was thirty-five. (It may well be that William was in part responsible for scaring off his sisters' respect suitors by dangling his leg through a disused stovepipe hole in the parlour ceiling).²

In 1906 William and his older sister Alice left the city of their birth for Vancouver, British Columbia. While Alice initially found work in an office and then moved on to work for British Columbia Telephone, William found work as a clerk at an unspecified location.



William Lutman in the famous "Hollow Tree" in Vancouver's Stanley Park. Courtesy of Lynne Stott.

By 1909 William was working for the A and C Grocery Company and resided at 729 Church Street. The following year he had switched employment to that of driver for Thomas J. Thomas at 838 Pender Street. He continued to work as a driver next for H.J. Thorne Company out of the Carter-Cotton Building at 198 Hastings Street West, and then by 1913 he was listed as driver for Thorpe and Company and was living at 1081 Howe Street, sharing quarters with his sister for the first time since moving west.*

By the beginning of the summer of 1914 war clouds were gathering on the horizon as the situation in Europe grew increasingly grim. Most Canadians, however, remained oblivious to the situation. For the extended Lutman family came the welcome news that Florence had given birth to a healthy baby boy, James Edward Gordon Houghton, thus promoting William to the status of uncle. Two weeks prior to the child's birth the assassination of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian thrones in Sarajevo had caused a stir throughout the western world, but seemed to little more than yet another isolated crisis in the Balkan region, too far away from the Canadian reality to be of any consequence. Two and a half weeks after William's elevation to unclehood Austria declared war on Serbia. In quick succession European powers descended into war and on August 4, 1914 Great Britain and its Empire, including its Canadian subjects in London, Winnipeg and Vancouver, were at war with Germany. Thousands of Canadian youth were chomping at the bit to enlist and do their bit for the great cause. Spirits were high as Canadians fell into a fevered pitch of war excitement and patriotic intensity. The call to fight for King and Country was not lost on members of the Lutman family. Indeed William was not without military experience having served for three years in the 18th Field Ambulance Corps.³

While the 1914 edition of *Henderson's Greater Vancouver Directory* listed William as still employed as a driver for Thorpe and Company, in 1915 his name was conspicuously absent. In the interim he had left the Pacific coast and returned home to London landing work as a salesman at Cowan's Hardware Company.⁴ However, by the end of 1915 he was on the move again having travelled to Winnipeg where he made his home with Florence and Jim Houghton



William in uniform, ca 1916. One copy was labelled "for Fan & Bert" references to his sister Frankie and her husband Albert Lynch. Courtesy of Jean Dunham.

* Alice's departure for the west was possibly due to "ill-fated love." There is a family tradition that it was she who had met the young Albert Lynch and brought him home to meet the rest of the family. In any case as we have seen Lynch and Alice's elder sister, Frankie, took an intense liking to each other and married.

and became acquainted with his infant nephew, Gordon. There is no record or tradition of what led to this move although the economic downturn that beset Canada beginning in 1913 may have been a contributing cause to William's two relocations. Whether or not he found employment in Winnipeg on December 1, 1915 he appeared before Justice of the Peace J.E. Hansford and filled out attestation papers. William James Lutman enlisted for overseas service in the Canadian Expeditionary Force with the Royal Winnipeg Rifles. One sentimental family tradition holds that he enlisted upon getting word that back in Ontario his youngest brother George had signed up William followed suit determined that "Georgie" needed someone to protect him. However, this tale of touching fraternal devotion the reality is that George did not ultimately enlist until 1918. While it is possible that George could have attempted to join up earlier, there were other potential reasons why William through his hat into the ring. Although he listed his "Trade or Calling" as that of a teamster, he may have been unemployed. He may also have been motivated by a quest for adventure or a real sense that the conflict was a noble and patriotic crusade. He left no written testimony as to his motivations and his extant letters shed no light on the matter. While he gave his address as the Houghton home on Garfield Street he named his London-based sister Annie as his next of kin. W.G. Smith witnessed his enlistment.⁵

William was sent to Manitoba's hastily improvised training facility Camp Hughes, named for the Dominion's unstable Minister of the Militia Sir Sam Hughes. Having gone through basic training William wrote to Florence back in Winnipeg with important instructions "Dear Sister, Will you kindly pack my trunk as I am going home on furlough and will let you know when to deliver it to the station. Will pay the cartage when I see you at the station. Will wire you when to meet me at the station. Will."⁶



Two postcards of Manitoba's Camp Hughes. The card to the right was sent to Ellen (Miller) Lutman in London.

Courtesy of Jean Dunham.

For whatever reasons the proposed meeting did not occur. With a war in full swing there was little time for leave taking, and as William later apologized “Florence I was sorry that I could not see you before I left as my time at home was short but I will see you when I return to Canada.”⁷ Almost immediately William then began the first leg of his long journey to the east and while provided a few days with the family in London he was shipped onto Halifax where he boarded the *RMS Olympic** which had been seconded by the Admiralty as a troop carrier. The *Olympic* left Halifax on September 18, 1916 and landed a week later in Liverpool.⁸ As William explained in a letter dated October 3, 1916 from Witly Camp in Surrey, England:

Well we arrived safe and sound in England after a very fine trip cross I am going on pass next week for six day and I will go down and see Dads Brothers and sister and I intent to go to London for 2 days as I have heard so much about it. I have wrote home and also to Fan [Frankie] so they will know where to write I had a fine time at home only I did not have very long. Dad and Jack and I went to the fair and Dad would not go to work while I was home Alice came home and we meet her at the station and I saw her for 2 hour because I had to leave at 4. Ink has run out so I must finished with final This is a fine place and we like it far better than Camp Hughes. We are fed well and lots of changes in the food. How is the children keeping also Jim and yourself. Gosh I would have like[d] to have seen you and Geo and Maggie[†] but we will look for the time to come when we will see each other again. We cannot tell very much about the camp as we are not allow[ed] to for fear and of the enemy might get ahold of any letters. I am still on the police and we have a hut for are [sic] selfs and also the cells to look after. I want you to write to me and I will write as often as I can get time. Well I hope you are all well . . . Goodbye Sister & Brother, I remain Yours XXX Brother Will. Pte WJ Lutman No 828272 A Company 144 Battalion Witly Camp, Surrey England.⁹

On October 21, 1916 William again wrote to his sister to fill her in on his life in England, and his visits with their father’s relatives, beginning:

Just a few lines to let you no that I am well and I hope that you and Jim and the children are all well. We have been in England 4 weeks and I sure like this Camp. I had six days down at Uncle Johns [Lutman] place and had a good time. I had a letter from Annie and I want you to send those photo to her I am still on the police and we have lots of work to do here I want you and Jim to write to me as we do not no when we will be order to go to the front I hope it will not be long as we want to go and help to win this war. I had a fine time on my pass and I am looking for another one before long . . .¹⁰

* Sister ship of *RMS Titanic* which sank in 1912.

[†] It is not clear whether George and Maggie refer to his siblings or may be references to friends of Florence and Jim Houghton in Winnipeg.

While stationed in England William spent most of his leave time visiting with relatives in and around Portsmouth and Gosport. In particular he became quite close to his cousin May (Lutman) Needham Habens (1881-1966). The youngest of three children born to James' older brother, John, May had been widowed with a young daughter in 1909 when she remarried in 1912 to Joseph H.B. Habens (1890-1973) who was a stoker tied with Britain's merchant navy. In addition to his father's blood relatives, Will also made acquaintances with the extended Habens family, namely Joseph's sister Winnie and brother, Jack, who served in the Royal Navy. William made quite an impression on his English relatives although it was not always the most positive from the perspective of the older members of the family. As May's daughter Winifred (1908-2007) recalled "William . . . visited his English relatives a number of times, he had been a Mountie and was a 'bad lad' who worried the grown-up members of the family but delighted the youngsters with his tales of the backwoods."¹¹ Even allotting for the passage of time and the vagaries of memory it would seem that William embellished his own life story, a fact that may have been apparent to members of his own generation but which delighted his youthful cousins.



William Lutman and Winifred Needham, ca. 1916. Courtesy of Jean Dunham.

His own accounts of his visits to his Lutman relatives were more prosaic and, not surprisingly, did not reference his supposed adventures in the backwoods. In a letter written from Seaford, Sussex, late in 1916 William wrote to Florence:

Well here goes for a few lines to you to let you no that I am still in England but we don't no [know] how soon we will [be] before we are order[ed] to France. The sooner the better as we want to get a shot at the huns. I suppose you have heard from home that I have been down to Uncles place for a week and also saw his two daughters and his son. I was down to May for the week end and they sure used me fine and want me to spend xmas with them but I am afraid that we will not have any as we are having a time with the measles and we cannot leave camp. We are on sea coast and have a fine view of the sea from the hut door. We will soon be leaving here for a new camp and it will [be] a lot nearer Mays so it will not take so long [to] go get down to see her. I am in love with her [and] also her girl May looks just like sister Maude.* Well I guess

* Maude Elizabeth Lutman (1883-1939).

you have lots of cold weather and snow We have fine frosty weather but no snow and it is fine weather How is the children and Jim and yourself. I have gone back to the ranks as I thought it would be better than the police and one has more time to yourself we start drill at eight-thirty and finished at four thirty so you have a long time till the next day I am often in bed at eight at night as we cannot get to town at night Will you send those photos home as Dad would like to have them. Well you cannot hardly hear yourself speak for the noise that the boys are making tonight all about the war all kinds of arguments and it is fun to listen to them. Swo [so] Geo* has gone back home and I hope he had a good time Well sister and brother this will be my last letter that you will [get] from me before Xmas so I will wish you a Merry Xmas and a Happy New year and hope to see you before another year roll[s] away so I will now close With Love to you all

Pte W.J. L. a comp. 144 Batt¹²



William Lutman. The sign behind him is partially obscured but may read "Medical Officer". His armband appears to have RN or RM on it. Courtesy of Jean Dunham.



William Lutman. Courtesy of Jean Dunham.

* George Lutman (1893-1978), William's youngest sibling.

On January 18, 1917 he was transferred from the 144th to the 18th Reserve Battalion, but this did not mean he was about to see action immediately. However, on February 16th he was drafted into the 8th Battalion that was to be shipped to France from Seaford Camp, and arriving on February 17th. The boredom he had experienced was probably about to change. There is no question that the tedium of life in an English camp and the separation from his family was weighing heavily upon William, but with action about to start he took an opportunity to write to his sister in Winnipeg:

On Active Service
Y.M.C.A. WITH THE BRITISH Y.M.C.A.
EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

Feb 18/
No 829272
8 Canadian (BEF)

Dear Sister

France

Hear goes to see if you are still alive as I have only had one letter since I have arrived in England from you. But I guess you have enough to do looking after the two little ones. How do they stand the cold weather. Well I had a good time with Dads people and I hope to go back again and see them. Our battalion is all broken up. What is Jim doing these days and is there lots of work. I hardly no what to say as we are not allowed to say any thing about the place. I get a letter from home every week and some paper I saw a Winnipeg paper today and I had a look through it I hope you are keeping well and Jim also your two children

With Love to All
Your Brother
W.J. L.



Virtually nothing can said of this photograph except that it was with a collection of papers related to William Lutman. Whether he is in the photograph is unknown. Courtesy of Jean Dunham.

As he later explained to Florence, though his time at the front would be, in chronological time short, it must have been a lifetime of tension and worry. During this time he saw plenty of action. On Easter Sunday, April 9, 1917 Lutman was with the other Canadian troops as they fought to gain Vimy Ridge. It was a battle he later claimed he would never forget, describing it as “hell on earth . . .” The assault by the Canadians saw over ten thousand Canadian casualties with over three thousand-five hundred dead. It ended in a Canadian victory and became a national legend, leading some to argue that this engagement was a pivotal moment when Canada emerged from colony to nation. Lutman continued at the front after the Canadian victory, but during a major counterattack on April 28th he was shot through the right elbow joint with a machine gun bullet* while serving on Vimy Ridge and was immediately evacuated to a Canadian hospital at Boulogne for a couple of days before being shipped back to Shorncliffe, England.¹³ As the *London Free Press* reported on May 19, 1917:



William Lutman, an unnamed comrade and a dog, ca. 1916 or 1917. Courtesy of Jean Dunham.

Tuesday Inspector James Lutman, of the city health department, received a letter from his son, Pte. Wm. J. Lutman saying that he was well and describing some phases of the big advance at Vimy Ridge where he came through unhurt. To-day Mr. Lutman received an official notification from Ottawa that his son had been since been [sic] wounded in the elbow and admitted to a hospital at Boulogne. In the letter received yesterday after acknowledging receipt of parcels from home, Pte. Lutman wrote: “I suppose you read about the big advance we made on Easter Monday. I will never forget it as long as I live. Everything went like clockwork and Fritz never dreamt we were coming over. He had some of the best dugouts that I have ever seen, and if the Ridge had been ours, Fritz could never have had taken it from us. The way the guns did their work could not have been better and all the battalions that went over with us behaved fine. We could not have asked for a finer day to go over. The sun was shining and the ground was in good shape.”[†] Pte. Lutman writes also that he

*There was a tradition that William was shot by an enemy airplane as his unit was marching back from the front. The origins of this tradition are unknown. Glenn Stott, December 16, 2012.

[†] William’s description of the weather was either a piece of fiction meant to spare his family from the reality or was a piece of sarcasm given that the battle occurred during a miserable combination of sleet and snow which some historians believe gave the Canadians a tactical advantage. Alexander Turner. *Vimy Ridge 1917: Byng’s Canadians Triumph at Arras* (London: Osprey Publishing, 2005), 52.

has a German belt which he is going to bring home for a souvenir. The German to whom it belonged will not need it any more. He also secured a German bayonet as a souvenir, but found it hampered his marching and threw it away. At the time of writing his battalion was looking forward to going out on several days' rest. In the advance, the Germans rained over great numbers of shells, but the Canadians kept right on going straight ahead.¹⁴

The fact that William was seriously wounded must have caused much anxiety amongst the family back in London and Winnipeg, although it must surely have been a relief when William was able to send word personally to them to explain his ordeal. In one particularly poignant letter written from the Granville Canadian Hospital at Ramsgate in either May or June, 1917 William explained to Florence:

Your welcome letter received I am glad to hear that Jim and you was well also the little ones. I suppose you have heard that I have been wounded but I am getting along fine and I should not be surprise[d] if I am sent home as my arm will never be the same again. I was shot right through the right elbow and I am going under a[n] operation on Friday June 29th as the nerves are all gone and my little finger is dead[.] I can hit it and cannot feel it at all. I had three months and two weeks in the front trenches, and went over the top twice and advances but I will never forget Easter Sunday and April 28th as long as I live it sure was hell on earth with are [our] artillery and Fritz giving but we [gave?] ten shots over to him for every one he sent over to us. They are a d ____ [William's blank] coward when you get up to them with the cold steel they don't like the feel of it. I liked the life OK only it was getting ones grub it was fine sleeping down in the dug outs when you got used to it . . .

Separated by more than ocean from his immediate family William found comfort in the proximity of his father's family. In particular May Habens was not far from William's thoughts, and she and William had become close. Referring to a recent photograph of his nephew and niece William continued to Florence:

The children [Gordon and Marney] look fine and I will keep the photo and let May see it the next time I go to see her she is a fine woman and full of fun Gosh but my arm is sore today it feels if some body had hot irons on it When I first got hit it felt [as] if I had been hit with a ten ton hammer as it went numb as could be. I hope you are all well and that Jim is all right again. Please write soon and tell Gordon [Houghton born 1914] that the chain is his . . .¹⁵

On June 29th he underwent surgery and the presiding physician Captain McCallum recorded that:

Suture *Ulnar nerve*. Incision 7 " long over ulnar nerve as it passed around elbow. Nerve exposed and found to be involved in dense scar tissue as it passed around internal condyle of humerus. Nerve was *freed from scar tissue* and stimulation applied with no response in muscles supplied. Nerve was *sectioned a site of dense nodule of foran [sic]* fibrous tissue and no bundles were present in the nerve trunk. The cords were

sectioned little by little until healthy never bundles were obtained about 1 " being removed. In order to suture ends it was found necessary to change the course of the nerve from behind to in front of the internal condyle of humerus. The ends were then sutured with fine catgut with the arm fixed at the elbow. The site of suture was wrapped in a fat sheath. Wound closed with catgut, silke worm gut, and horsehair, the arm still being flexed was put up in splint . . .

Over the next several weeks William was under the care of Dr. Frederick G. Banting who would go on to be one of the co-discoverers of insulin. On July 14th Banting noted his patient was "making good progress." A week later the splint was removed and galvanism (a form of electrical treatment) and massage were ordered and the following day he was transferred to the second floor of the hospital. On August 10th another attending physician assessed that while William was progressing he would never be able to regain the full use of his hand. While he could "flex his little finger completely" his sense of touch was greatly diminished in the most affected part of his hand. What William felt about his wound is unclear, but he may have counted himself as extremely fortunate as the wound would not leave him hopelessly disabled but it did mean he would never be able to soldier again. On August 22nd he was transferred to the Princess Patricia Canadian Hospital at Ramsgate and then on August 30th to a military convalescence hospital at Woodcote Park at Epsom where he would remain for the better part of a month.¹⁶

At the end of September 1917, William was transferred to the Canadian Military Hospital, Kirkdale in Liverpool, almost certainly as preparation for shipment home to Canada. While his arm had improved to a degree it was clear that he would never be able to fight again. As he wrote to Florence and Jim Houghton on October 11th:

Well I will try and write a few lines today as my arm feels good. But is a long way from being right Well I am a little nearer home now. as we will sail from this port and by the time you get this I think I will be on my way home I am going to try and get sent to London as soon as I get to Winnipeg I will have to go to the place w[h]ere I enlisted I saw all of Dad's people and I had a good [] ? [] days with them. I was in Gosport four times with Jack* taken apples and plums to market it was fine and I saw May each time. Uncle Alfred[']s boy† was down to see me at Jack's he is a big fellow. He does not believe in soldiering so he is in jail and his Mother think[s] he is right. If you could see his Father you could see Dad as he and Dad are just about the same size and look alike May looks like . . . Our Maude Well how is the little ones keeping also Jim and yourself I have been in nine different hospital sent [since?] I have been

* The identity of "Jack" is somewhat problematic. It may refer to one of William's cousins, although it may also be a reference to the enigmatic Jack Habens who may have been a brother of Joseph H.B. Habens and therefore May's brother-in-law. In a collection of postcards and other mementos that belonged to William's sister Margaret (1888-1969) where several references to Jack and Winnie Habens.

† Alfred Lutman (born January 15, 1867) was the youngest brother of James Bone Lutman (1845-1922). Alfred was married in about 1892.

in England and this is the best place yet. Talk about dirty people well I never saw so many dirty women and kids in all my life and I don't think I ever saw so many little children some have not had a wash in a month I will bet No I think this will be all for the present . . .¹⁷

On October 17, 1917 William was formally "Invalided to Canada" and boarded ship back across the Atlantic. In the last of his surviving letters to Florence he wrote:

Just a few lines to let you no that I arrived safe after a very fine trip across which took eight days. I will no today if I have to come to Winnipeg or go home. I am trying to go to London for my treatment. Oh you do not no how glad I was when I saw the shore of Canada it sure did look good to me and I never want to leave it again. The Red Cross were very good to us when we landed they gave us apples smokes and matches and many a kind word. I have just had a walk around the waterfront and it is [a] very hilly place and as about as dirty a[s] Liverpool. I am feeling fine and I hope you are all well. I had the best breakfast this morning that I have had for a long time. It tastes so good. We are in fine quarters with iron beds Well I think this is all for now With Love to all Your Brother Bill.¹⁸

While the military was not always known for its compassion, William's hope that he would be permitted to recuperate in his native city with his relations near was granted and he was formally discharged in London on October 25, 1917.



This photograph also probably dates from after his return to London and he appears to be wearing George's uniform. Courtesy of Jean Dunham.



A photograph of William at 857 Wellington Street probably taken during his convalescence. On the back he wrote "Do you no [sic] this W."

Courtesy of Jean Dunham.

He never served overseas again. His injuries had not been life threatening but they ended his military career. There was a concerted effort in some quarters to try to find meaningful employment for those wounded servicemen returning home. It

is likely that it was for this reason that William found employment with the Federal Government as a letter carrier in the City of Sarnia, living for a time with his maternal cousin, George Ash. However, by 1927 he was again at loose ends. What led to his departure from the post office is unknown but it may well have had to do with a difficult transition back to civilian life.¹⁹

Following his departure from Sarnia little can be said with certainty about the next thirty years of his life, although he again turned his attentions westward. Whether he had reconnected with old friends or associates or felt there were better prospects for a returned soldier on the west coast can only be speculated. In 1927 William paid a visit to Florence and the rest of the Houghton family in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. The Houghtons were particularly isolated from the rest of the family and so a visit by a member of the extended family was a rare treat. William's seven-year-old niece, Jean, was particularly enthralled by her uncle who she remembered as being a wonderful storyteller, comedian, and prankster.²⁰ While she may have privately worried about her brother's restlessness it was also clear that Florence was overjoyed to reconnect with her beloved brother. As his nephew Gordon Houghton recalled his mother kept a good stock of her dandelion wine. Within a matter of days of his arrival William had managed to polish off the entire store, leaving his nephew to attribute this both as a testament to his mother's skill as a winemaker but also in no small part to lingering traumas and emotional scars left by the war. At the same time William managed to teach his nephew and namesake Bill Houghton to cheat at playing cards. Florence was both amused and displeased and scolded her brother for his corrupting influence although she probably enjoyed her brother's shenanigans. For the longest time following William's visit Florence refused to let her children play rummy until young Bill had forgotten how to cheat.²¹ The young Bill recalled that his uncle's tales held the younger generation in rapt attention. Florence may have been amused by some of the fantastic tales given that she also enjoyed jokes and irreverence as much as her brother but she did playfully scold her brother for his exaggerations or outright fictions.²² After leaving Prince Albert William continued westward to Vancouver on June 5, 1928 he sent Florence a set of Vancouver postcards and on the back "have yet to find work".²³



William Lutman and his Houghton nieces and nephews in Prince Albert, 1927. Left to right: Gordon, Bill, William, Jean, and Marney.

Courtesy of Jean Dunham.

The 1929 edition of *Wrigley's British Columbia Directory* recorded that "W. James Lutman" was then living at 609 Pender Street West at the Manor Rooms, though he had no occupation listed.²⁴ However, while he was vaguely listed as living in Vancouver at the time of his mother's death in 1935 his name is not to be found listed in directories for Greater Vancouver after 1929.²⁵ In fact he was settled up the Fraser River in the small community of Milner near Fort Langley.²⁶ His family believed that he worked for most of the interwar period in the lumber industry. His Houghton nieces and nephews had fond recollections of him from when he had visited them in Prince Albert and indeed had been given regular updates from their mother who had maintained a special bond with her brother through all their years of separation. Another nephew explained that if his other siblings wanted to learn anything about their brother they frequently had the news relayed from Florence.²⁷ One of his nieces recalled that William lived for so many years all alone and in the end "he had a rough life."²⁸ At some juncture William suffered some sort of mishap that left him with a severe limp.²⁹

Like so much of his life in the interwar period his personal life remains completely veiled. Having left England in 1917 William almost never saw any of his English relatives again. There has been much speculation about the nature of the relationship he had with his cousin, May Lutman Needham Habens, but there is no evidence to suggest that it was anything but platonic. A few disjointed family traditions and scraps from family papers hint that at some juncture William may have found or pursued love which was thwarted at every turn. In her later years Alice Lutman explained to one of her great-nephews that at one time William had made it known to the family that he intended to marry. For reasons not then articulated, some members of the family had been appalled at this prospect and a delegation of his unmarried sisters had been instructed to interceded (either in person or through letter) to end their brother's matrimonial hopes.³⁰ If William did indeed hope to marry only to have his family kybosh the plan, it may help to explain why he remained more-or-less a stranger to them for so many decades.*

As one of his London nephews explained, "Uncle Bill lived out west for so many years, and he finally he ended up coming back."³¹ It seemed to many of the younger generation that William's decision to return to London came out of the blue. Having reached his sixties the return to the family fold may have been a prudent financial move. It may also have been that after years of separation the approach of old age made him anxious to renew family connections. He became acquainted with his nieces and nephews, to many of whom he was

* In the early 1970s when the executors were working to divide the remaining Lutman estate between William's only surviving sibling, George, and the children of Florence and Jack, a lawyer inquired about the family of William Lutman. When it was explained that William had never married, the lawyer had persisted in pressing his point which caused George to be particularly indignant. The matter was dropped as a result. Assuming the story to be genuine there are a number of possible explanations. While it would tempting to read into this the fact that the lawyer may have been privy to some rumour or gossip it is equally likely that he was simply working to ensure that all the potential heirs were accounted for and nothing more. Bud Lutman, ca. 1992.

essentially a stranger, as well as increasing numbers of great nieces and nephews. In particular he had a soft spot for his great-niece Lynne Dunham, whose mother, Jean (Houghton) Dunham, had such fond memories of her uncle from his visit to Prince Albert many years before. As Jean and her husband Russell spent most Sunday evenings with Florence and Jim they would frequently drive the couple to 857 Wellington Street to visit with the assorted aunts and William. As a result Lynne saw her great-uncle with regularity and developed a close bond with him. He, in turn, called her 'Princess'.³² However, he was distressed by her tendency to suck on her thumb and playfully threatened to put pepper on it to stop her habit.³³ As Jean and Russell built their home on the banks of the Oxbow Creek in Lobo Township west of the city, William paid several visits there. On July 1, 1951 William and Alice made the trip out to the Dunhams' cabin for part of the day.³⁴ On one occasion William's presence was a boon to his niece who found herself being badgered by a persistent salesman who would not take no for an answer. Hearing the exasperated exchange at the door, William pulled himself up to his full height and stepped out of the shadows and loomed over the unwanted visitor. The sudden appearance of the retired lumberman who had faced the firestorm of Vimy Ridge was enough to send the salesman beating a hasty retreat.³⁵ On April 3, 1952 William spent part of the day with Florence at her apartment so that he could visit with Jean and Lynne. At the end of the month he was back out to the Dunhams' to spend the afternoon.³⁶ On June 29, 1952 Jean recorded that "Auntie Mar, Aunt Alice & Uncle Bill came out to-night. Russell took Mum & the Aunts for a walk up the creek. [They] Brought back some ferns & tiger lilies to plant."³⁷ While Lynne Dunham got on very well with her great-uncle not every member of her generation had the same experience. Although no one doubted that William was at heart a nice man one of his great-nephews recalled that William came across as rather gruff. He suspected that William "didn't take to children very easily".³⁸



In 1960 William visited his niece, Jean (Houghton) Dunham, who was hospitalized for *six weeks* (!) with a cracked knee. Left to right: Jean, William Lutman, Susan Nakoolak Campbell (a RNA and daughter of Marney [Houghton] Campbell) and Gordon Houghton. Courtesy of

Lynne Stott.

William continued to live with his sisters making his quarters in the small bedroom with a step down off the landing.³⁹ He celebrated his seventy-seventh birthday on March 17, 1962, but the end came on January 8, 1963. The following day his great-niece, Lynne Dunham, wrote in her diary “Went to the funeral home tonight to see Uncle Bill[.] He looked very nice”.⁴⁰ William was buried the following day beside his sisters in an unmarked plot in Woodland Cemetery not far from his parents.

While William Lutman left more of a documentary record of his life than most of his siblings, it is almost exclusively confined to a short period of two years during which he participated in one of the greatest and most devastating conflicts of the age. The letters are tangible connection to William and the Great War, but while they shed light on some of his activities they provide little insight into the personality behind them. William was, by most accounts, a genial man who was a loyal brother and presumably son, but he was a man who lived his life largely outside the family circle. The patterns of his life suggest that he was a restless man. Certainly there are substantive clues that his experiences in war left indelible scars that lasted a lifetime, but perhaps some of this inability to settle down predated the war. What precipitated his return home to London and his childhood home amongst his sisters is beyond our knowing, but it seems that at least he found companionship and contentment in his last years.

William James Lutman, born March 17, 1885 at 857 Wellington St., London, Middlesex Co., Ontario, Canada.

Son of James Bone Lutman (1845-1922) and Ellen Miller (1849-1935).

Died January 8, 1963 in London, Middlesex Co., Ontario, Canada.

Buried Woodland Cemetery, London, Middlesex Co., Ontario, Canada.



Lynne Dunham, William Lutman, and Pete the cat, ca. 1951 at the Dunham property in Lobo Township. Courtesy of Lynne Stott.