

Lyons. P.O. Box 27, Kennebunkport, Maine 04046

A Christmas Letter

*From our Grandma Mary Donohoe, (Mrs. James) age 92,
Yankton, to her sister, Ellie in Iowa.*

"Lets make a resolution not to worry for once in our lives. We've worried for nearly 100 years and not a thing we ever worried about ever happened so lets turn over a new leaf. "

Sun. Dec 11, 1948

Dear sister,

*At last I've gotten started to ans. your 2 nice letters as I don't stay put long enough to write. I've been very busy doing my little bit for xmas, making dish towels with a little *desine*, aprons, holders. I made 6 sheets for Mary [our mother and bleached them. Also 8 pillow covers with buttons on. It's hard for me to make button holes with my stiff fingers but I know she will appreciate these things more then as she has more work then she can do. I am planning on making my usual 4 jars of Xmas cookies this week. I need the last week to shine up the house for Xmas. I don't do it all. Ann does the sweeping at night as I cant use the electric sweeper but I do all *all the dustings*. I am a good sitter. I do all my baking and cooking sitting on the kitchen stool. There is no danger of me hurting myself. I am so slow. I just poke around.*

*How are you dear Elle. Do your knees get stifer. Mine don't but I cant walk very good. I cant learn to walk with a cane. I get nervous. DO you go to church every Sun. I do but I am all in when I get home. But my appetite and health is good but my legs never got strong. I get so tired walking from the church out to the car with Ann's help. But Ell we have lots to thankfull for. Ell, we are able to take care of our self. The family are all well. My arm is going on a strike. I finish in the morn. ******

My arm is rested now so I'll finish my letter as I don't get up in time to write before the mail man gets here. Is the girls coming home Xmas. Ella [our aunt from Chicago] is coming Sat. the 24th. I wish they were all home and back again. The worry of their long trips take all the joy out of their visit. But lets make a resolution not to worry for once in our lives. we've worried for nearly 100 years and not a thing we ever worried about ever happened so lets turn over a new leaf.

Ruth [Uncle Francis Donohoe d.1948] was in Chicago just for 3 days. She was getting very lonesome coming Xmas so Mary [our mother-Mrs. William F. Lyons] told her if she'd go she take care of the boys [our cousins Jim, George, Jerry]. She went back and forth with their children to school. Of course it was very hard on Mary, but she felt so sorry for Ruth.

I got a nice Xmas letter yesterday from Alicia. The dear child we can imagine how she'd enjoy if they could Xmas with you all. No matter how happy a home you have your heart always wanders back to your childhood home on Xmas. May God grant eternal rest the souls of our dear ones [Grandpa d. 1946]. The world surely seems empty and vacant without them.

Poor Kit [Uncle Will Donohoe d. 1947] is very lonesome. We asked her to spend Xmas with us but her brother Ed wants her too. Mary (Wadsworth-Kit's daughter) is coming. Of course Jane cant come with the baby. Its 400 miles. Francis Lyons [our brother, School ff Mines is coming the 20th.

Well dear Ell write when you get time and don't work yourself sick getting ready for Xmas. We had a lovely fall but we've got a regular blizzard today. Hope it will be fine Xmas. Ann is very busy fin her Gift shop. I'll be glad Xmas will be over.

-----Mary (1103 Douglas Ave, Yankton, South Dakota)

Mother (Mary C. Lyons) gave me Grandma's original letter, four pages written with ball point pen on the big ruled tablet in elegant 19th century penmanship. I remember Christmas Eve after supper when grandma and grandpa drove down to our farm along with aunts Ann and Ella. Ella would disappear. Santa Claus soon emerged from the back stairs--her shoes gave her away. After gifts were passed around brother Jack played the piano, carols were sung, and I soloed "Silent Night" in best boy soprano sounds as tears welled up in Grandma's eyes. Grandparents and aunts went home; we went to bed and rose to go to midnight Mass after which the best gift was served, mother's oyster stew. Nona and I continue the oyster tradition on Christmas eve, laced with White wine and a leek. I lunched daily with Grandma while I was at Yankton College (Fall-1955). When I asked if she remembered Lincoln, she rested her soup bowl, gracefully poised her hands on her lap and said, "Yes, I recall when they drew him across the country". She was 10 years old on a farm in Johnson County, Iowa when the train drew Lincoln's body across the country to Illinois. Grandma died March 5, 1956, age 100, a beautiful Irish lady whose designer dish towels and quilts still grace our home.

Merry Christmas * December, 1996

Bob & Nona, Cambridge, Massachusetts