WILLIAM AND MARY

Their Lives and Times

By Frank Lyons
WILLIAM AND MARY

Their Lives and Times

By Frank Lyons
FOR my children and grandson:

Kathleen Elizabeth (Lyons) Tabak

John Edward Lyons.

Joseph Lyons Tabak
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prologue</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1 Going Away to School</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2 The Beginning</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3 The First Several Years Together</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4 The Great Depression</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5 The Middle Years Together</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6 World War II</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7 The Domestic Side of Life</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8 Community Life</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9 The Farm</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 10 Family Social Life</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 11 Catholicism</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 12 Education</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 13 Patrick Joseph</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 14 Francis William</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 15 Eugene Thomas</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 16 John Albert</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 17 Thomas Anthony</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 18 The Twins</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 19 The Later Years Together</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 20 The Later Years Without Bill</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ogham Alphabet and Celtic Symbols</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epilogue</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A The Legend of O’Donoghue</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B Family Reunion Stories</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C Excerpt from <em>The Nunda Irish</em></td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HERODOTUS, the Greek historian, said that writing history is a way of paying tribute to the departed. I have written this book as a tribute to my parents, William (Bill) and Mary (Donohoe) Lyons. The seven children of Bill and Mary were their primary raison d’être. The Lyons family was so integrally woven together that Bill and Mary’s story must also include the story of their children. Grandchildren, nieces and nephews were important to Bill and Mary but it is impossible to include their stories within the limiting confines of this book.

Edmund Burke, the Irish parliamentarian, wrote, “People cannot look forward to posterity who never look backward to their ancestors”. Bill and Mary’s descendents can look forward and never need to lament, “If only I could have known my forebears or heard their story!” This book will help them learn about their ancestors and understand their own origins. They will recognize that they are indelibly stamped with Bill and Mary’s character. They will know that their roots extend deep into the fertile, cultural soil that was so well tilled for a time by Bill and Mary in the middle decades of the 20th century in a farm community in eastern South Dakota.

The story of Bill and Mary is based largely on my recollections, observations, and files of available family documents. I acknowledge that recollections and observations are sometimes defined as the muddled memories of the elderly. Each of my brothers reviewed the book draft, confirmed most of my recollections, and added insights, stories, pictures and information that I did not have
or had forgotten. A few of the brothers took umbrage at some of the things I wrote about their youthful peccadilloes. One of my nieces said that the chapter on her father made him sound like a juvenile delinquent! The brothers took further umbrage at my descriptions of their adult achievements on the grounds that I had overly enhanced them. However, their umbrage diminished when I placated them with a bottle of aged Irish whiskey. They hinted that I should write a disclaimer stating: “The descriptions of the youthful improprieties and the adult achievements of Bill and Mary’s children are, in some instances, the arguable opinion of the author.” Nevertheless, I am convinced that my memory is superior to theirs and I am less prone to “retroactive cleansing” so I did not yield to their suggestions that I dilute their biographies.

Even though there is only a nine years age difference between the youngest and the eldest Lyons sibling there were profound changes in the economic and political circumstances of the country and the world during that time. By the time the younger children started to grow up, the devastating and crushing economic depression of the 1930’s had subsided and the cataclysmic transformation of society in the 1940’s due to World War II had started. The earlier experiences of the younger children were therefore quite different from those of their older siblings.

The history of the Lyons family previous to Bill and Mary’s time has been extensively researched and painstakingly written by William (Bill) McDonald, a second cousin of Bill Lyons, in his book, *The Nunda Irish*. Nunda is the name of the rural township near Madison in eastern South Dakota where many of the Lyons family lived. *The Nunda Irish* demonstrates the remarkable renaissance talents of Bill McDonald and shows his eclectic education in Physics, Mathematics, Law, and the Arts; and his diversified experiences in farming, industry, the military, local government, conservation and writing. Bill McDonald wrote
further on related subjects in *Dakota Incarnate, A Collection of Short Stories* - published by Mankato State University (Mankato, Minnesota) in 1995.

By the time the Lyons family immigrated to America from Ireland, their original name, *O'Liathain* as it was called in the Irish-Gaelic language, had been Anglicized. *The Nunda Irish* starts in the early 1840’s when Jeremiah and Ellen (Whelan) Lyons, grandparents of Bill Lyons, were married in Killrossanty, County Waterford, had two children and decided to “take the long road” when they sailed from tragically troubled Ireland to America. They came with a young friend, Kathleen O’Flynn, who died of “ship’s fever” during the terrible and tempestuous wintry ocean crossing. They arrived with Jeremiah deathly ill and robbed of the substantial wealth he brought with him to America. Jeremiah eventually recovered his health and vigor but was unable to establish the linen business that he and his partner, the father of Kathleen O’Flynn, had planned. He worked for a time on the Erie Canal before moving to Chicago where he established a farm of farm 40 acres along Archer Road in what is now the Bridgeport area of the city. Twelve years later he was attracted to the opportunities in the west so he moved on to Iowa and finally to South Dakota with his younger children.

Other insightful Lyons family and historical information is available in the *First Dakotan - The Lyons Experience*; and *Oklahoma Days - Dakota Son, Oil Country Lawyer*, by Thomas D. Lyons, a first cousin of Bill Lyons. His writings were compiled and edited by Robert Lyons, my youngest brother. Thomas Lyons was an accomplished author, lawyer, authority on oil industry law, intellectual, writer and member of the Oklahoma Supreme Court. Many of his writings were published in the 1940’s in *Commonweal*, a national magazine devoted to public affairs, religion, literature and the arts.
I urge readers of *William and Mary* to acquire these superbly written and compelling books in order to expand their knowledge of Lyons family history. I make this suggestion, however, with fear that discerning readers may compare the writing in these books to mine and, in the words of comedian Fred Allen, “Encourage the author (of *William and Mary*) to return his writing quills to the tail of the goose.”

Extensive documents on the Donohue (later to be spelled Donohoe) family are available back to the 1820’s when Great Grandfather Michael Donohoe was born in Castletown Geohegan, County Westmeath, Ireland and Ellen Peters – later to marry Michael – in County Tipperary. In earlier times, before the Anglicization of Irish names, the family name was O'Donnaghue (or O'Donnachada). The original name is of Viking origin. After arriving in America, Michael Donohue lived for a time in Cincinnati and New Orleans before moving to Illinois and finally to Johnson County, Iowa. The Donohoe history still awaits an author to consolidate the extensive available documents and compile them into a book of family lore.

I distributed related family and historical pictures throughout the book at the end of the chapters where they apply. I had to make many judgmental decisions on which pictures to use and which to leave behind in the family albums. If family pictures were unavailable or of poor quality, I used copies of photographs, illustrations and paintings from other sources.

As I started to write the story of Bill and Mary I could not see a good way to maintain focus on them and still write of their children. After some initial dithering, I finally decided it would be least distracting to the reader if I lightly sprinkled the children throughout the story at the appropriate times and later in the book devoted a full biographical chapter exclusively to each child.

I have had a lifelong experience in engineering and business writing but this book is my first attempt at “story
writing”. Apologies are offered if the readers detect a whiff of technical writing normally reserved for describing manufacturing machinery or financial analysis. I also extend apologies across the great divide between this life and the next to Mary (Donohoe) Lyons for any inadvertent misuse of the King’s English. Mary spent a lifetime vigorously attempting to drum into the minds of her students and children the proper use of her beloved English language.

I attempted, with some trepidation, to describe the human feelings of the involved people. I also included substantial descriptive details so readers, unfamiliar with the conditions and attitudes in Bill and Mary’s era, can easily project themselves back to their times. What is well known and second nature to me and my contemporaries may be unfamiliar to later generations. In some instances, I used regional wording and expressions to reflect the way people actually spoke in rural midwestern farming communities. I tried to show Bill and Mary’s extraordinary capability for keeping the burdens of their lives separate from the joys of living.

I included a thumbnail sketch of the history of the Great Depression and World War II because of the dominant influence they had on the lives of Bill and Mary and most Americans. The history of Ireland also decisively influenced their lives. I did not write a chapter on Irish history because it would have been a rewrite of much of chapter one of Bill McDonald’s book, “The Nunda Irish.” I did, however, with Bill McDonald’s permission, include in Appendix C an excerpt form his book covering conditions in 1845 at the time of Bill and Mary’s grandparent’s emigration. It gives a picture of the appalling condition of ship accommodations during the Atlantic crossings and the pitiful environment that awaited Irish emigrants upon landing in North America.

I salute and honor Bill and Mary for their earthly achievements and trust that they have found the well-deserved peace and renewal of their idyllic relationship in
the “Otherworld” - as they so confidently envisioned it while they still resided in this world. I hope they will look kindly on my attempts at understanding and depicting their lives and feelings and describing their legacy. Lastly, on behalf of all of Bill and Mary (Donohoe) Lyons’ descendents, I express gratitude for our good fortune of having them as our forebears.

Frank Lyons
Summer 2001
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

MY five brothers gave invaluable cooperation, assistance and encouragement during the writing of “William and Mary.” They were especially helpful in filling in the gaps in the chapters devoted to each of them and reminding me of incidents that were hidden in long inactive gray cells. The book reflects most of their suggestions and comments.

Brothers Pat and Jack with the assistance of their wives, Pearl and Margaret, provided many pictures and documents from their extensive files and other sources. My youngest brother, Bob, ably assisted in reviewing the entire book. My wife, Jean Monier Lyons, provided a constant stream of comments and judgements on all aspects of the book and resolved all computer application problems. A friend of long standing, Marchand Chaney, assisted in editing the book and added useful insights while reclining in her hammock on the beach of her winter home in the Yucatan of Mexico. Ralph Reynolds, a friend and accomplished professional writer and journalist, gave encouragement and advice. Bill McDonald gave advice and assistance on the mechanics of publishing and printing the book. The book’s failings, however, should be blamed solely on the author.
In late August of 1948, Francis Lyons arose from the bed that he had shared for most of his 18 years with his eldest brother, Pat. The bedroom was under the low, sloping second floor ceiling of his parent’s farmhouse three and a half miles east of Yankton, South Dakota. It would not be a normal day for Francis of participating in the farm work with his father, six siblings and the occasional hired hands.

Francis had his aluminum suitcase and a cardboard box packed and ready on the floor of the summer porch. He had $100 dollars in his pocket – the most cash he ever had at one time in his entire life. On the mother-of-pearl, formica-topped, kitchen table, with its chrome legs, was a brown paper bag of summer sausage sandwiches that his mother, Mary, had prepared for his lunch. The new, green, 1948 Plymouth, four door sedan, the first new car that his parents had ever owned, was backed out of the garage in readiness to take Francis four miles up the rich Missouri and James River valleys to town to meet the westbound steam powered train at the Milwaukee Railroad depot. The depot stood on Douglas Avenue a few short blocks from his Donohoe grandparent’s house.

A defining moment was about to occur in Francis’ life. He was ready to leave home for Rapid City in the Black Hills, 400 miles to the west, to enroll in the South Dakota School of Mines and to start his studies toward a degree in
mechanical engineering. He decided on this course of study and profession two years earlier in 1946 when his elder brother, Pat, received a brochure from the School of Mines. Pat had just graduated from high school and was about to join the army to serve a two-year enlistment in Korea. It was strange that Francis so decisively made this career decision at that time because he knew very little about the engineering profession and had almost no knowledge of how the profession was practiced.

The School of Mines was founded in the late 1800’s as a school for training gold assayers during the Black Hills gold rush days. Most of the gold mines are located in nearby Lead and Deadwood. The Homestake Mine in Lead is the largest gold mine in North America with access shafts running to below sea level even though the mine entrance stands over a mile above sea level. The School of Mines enrolled 400 students in 1948, mostly male. Even though the Mining Engineering Department enrollment was now a minor percent of the total school population, the mining tradition was so strong that the original name never changed.

After an ample breakfast of fried eggs, bacon, and homemade bread and jam, Francis took a walk around the farmstead for another look at what had been his home since birth and reflected on his decision to leave the farm. His confidence was high that he had made a good decision to study engineering. He did not yet know how much he would miss his comfortable existence with his family on the farm and in the community or how demanding the engineering studies would be.

The awful ferment, anxieties and uncertainties of adolescence were now behind Francis. He had largely dispelled the doubts about his self worth and potential academic capabilities. A wobbly self-identity had started to emerge. Self confidence was still a long time off but he now had at least a shaky hope that he could succeed in the study of engineering.
In high school he had been sensitive to the “town kids” taunting references to “dumb farmers.” To the “town kids, the “farm kids” were the community Philistines with their supposed lower social status and sophistication level. This was partially offset by the envy of the “town kids” for the “farm kids” due to their ownership of cars. The cars were a necessity for traveling to school from their distant farm homes.

For several years Francis had often asked himself if he had the makings for pursuing a life outside his comfortable and familiar rural environment. Although he had enjoyed farm life he could not see it as a permanent way of life for himself. He convinced himself that he could make a life elsewhere when he thought about his older relatives who had left their rural lives behind as they successfully pursued non-farm careers.

Uncle Jack Donohoe built a successful business in Yankton operating a wood products factory that produced egg cases and chicken crates. His factory employed 75 people cutting timber and sawing and nailing it into final products. When Francis was thirteen he worked in Uncle Jack’s factory, for 35 cents per hour, where he developed a burning motivation for getting an education that would forever avoid the need for working at the boring, repetitious, mind numbing task of operating factory machinery. Uncle Jim Lyons achieved success as a military officer ending his career as a Colonel and a port commander in occupied Japan. Bill’s cousin, Charles Lyons Coughlin, was an electrical engineering professor, factory manager and eventually the Chief Executive Officer of the Briggs and Stratton Corporation in Milwaukee. All of these relatives started their lives on their parent’s farms in South Dakota. Their precedents and conversations with them when they visited the family farm helped Francis develop confidence that he could also “make it” elsewhere.
Francis returned to the house for good-byes to his brothers and sister. Then he rode with his parents, Bill and Mary, down the half-mile of gravel and dirt road to the paved two-lane highway to Yankton, a town of 7,500 inhabitants. He waited on the outside platform of the railway depot for the arrival of the train. The train depot stood beside the Depot Café, the location of many high school beer-drinking bouts with friends. Cafes were usually built beside train depots because many trains had no restaurant facilities on board. It was customary for the trains to stop long enough for the passengers to disembark to eat and, if the towns were not dry, to have a drink of beer or whiskey. The train stops were short. There was a story of a city woman who complained to a cowboy on the stool beside her in a western train stop that her coffee was too hot to drink before the train departed. The cowboy said “Here, Ma’am, drink mine it’s already saucered and blowed”.

The “milk run” train came to a steamy, brake squealing stop and quickly departed for the twelve-hour trip across the fields and prairies west to Rapid City. It stopped at each town, generally spaced 15 to 30 miles apart. The need for farmers and ranchers to drive their teams of horses to town for weekly trading and shopping established the spacing of towns in the early days.

As the train moved west, the farms became less prosperous and soon ended to be replaced by the wide-open expanses of unfenced, open-range ranches on the sparsely settled prairie land. The residents of South Dakota always defined their locations as being “West River” or “East river” due to the bisecting of the state by the Missouri River. Generally the eastern part of the state is given to farming and the western part to ranching. South Dakota’s population is so low that only one Representative is elected to the House in Washington.

In late evening the train ran through the barren Badlands, the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Sioux (Lakota)
Indian Reservations, and arrived in Rapid City. Francis disembarked and took a taxi to his new home in the School of Mines dormitory. Already a bout of homesickness started to set in which would not subside for another three months.

He settled into the small, Spartan dormitory room that he would share for a year with another freshman. His roommate had a nasal condition that caused him to vigorously “snuffle” every few breaths. It immediately became obvious that this habit was even more annoying than the worst habits of his brothers whom he had left behind on the farm.

Francis completed school registration the next day and started attending his classes. He settled in for four years of concentrated engineering studies – as well as long hours of “what is the meaning of life” bull sessions with his buddies over a few (and sometimes not so few) beers.
In 1924, 25 year old Mary Carmelita Donohoe spent a few weeks of her summer teaching break visiting her brother and sister-in-law, Will and Kit Donohoe, who lived in the little town of Wagner, South Dakota, 60 miles west of Yankton. Kit had met a lively, young woman named Mary Lyons at the State Fire Tournament where her church was serving meals. Kit made arrangements for her to come by their house on Saturday evening to take Mary Donohoe to a dance at nearby Lake Andes. Several women named Mary will be mentioned in this book so the reader must be attentive as to which Mary is being featured at the moment. By about 10:00 P.M., Mary Lyons had not yet arrived so Mary Donohoe assumed that she was not coming and started to recite her evening prayers and prepare for bed. Just then a car arrived. When Mary Donohoe got into the Model-T Ford car for the 20-mile ride to the dance, she was introduced to another passenger in the car. It was Mary Lyons’ 25-year-old brother, William (Bill) Francis Lyons. Bill and Mary Lyons lived with their parents on a farm seven miles northeast of Wagner.

Mary Donohoe was quite accustomed to country entertainment such as house-parties, picnics, church dinners, sleigh rides, home talent shows, and especially dances, from her several years of teaching in the small, remote towns of Phillip and Murdo in the sparsely settled western prairies of South Dakota. A lively social life existed for young people out on the prairies. The usual form of
winter transportation for going to dances was in horse-drawn buggies or sleds. The sleds occasionally presented a peril. Mary Donohoe often spoke of going to a dance on a bitter snowy night when a western phenomenon known as a Chinook wind arose out of the west raising the temperature in minutes by over 60 degrees Fahrenheit and melting the snow. A horseback ride was the only way to return home.

Mary taught school in western South Dakota after receiving an education degree in 1920 from Yankton College, a liberal arts school affiliated with the Congregational Church. Teaching jobs closer to home were scarce.

Many of the rural schools were simple one-room wooden structures located on the, wind swept prairies. Only a generation earlier the prairie’s only occupants were vast herds of buffalo and occasional Sioux (Lakota) Indian camps. The schoolhouse was one of the few public buildings in western communities. It served as school, dance hall church, voting place and community meeting hall. The schoolteachers usually lived with the families of the students. In some cases the teacher lived in a corner of the schoolhouse with a suspended blanket serving as the wall to separate her “quarters” from the schoolroom.

Mary was familiar with one-room schools because she had attended one herself. In her memoirs she wrote, “I went to school in Morse (Iowa) about a mile away (from our farm home) and walked. I remember the dress (that I wore) – a red sailor dress. The teacher was Miss Burish. I don’t think she knew much. Her beau came to see her with a ‘fancy buggy and spirited horses.’ Once he kissed her. We were shocked.”

The ranchers lived in modest wood frame houses often beside the remains of their earlier, short-lived sod houses. The wood-framed houses were often constructed from precut and packaged materials purchased from Sears and Roebuck and delivered by railroad cars. The farmers
unloaded the cars, hauled the materials to the ranch sites and assembled the houses when there was a break from ranch work.

The sod houses, that were commonly called “soddies”, were built from turf dug up from the prairies. Sod was used because of the scarcity of wood and the lack of transportation for hauling building materials. “Soddies” were not entirely without comfort. They were warm in the winter and cool in the summer. “Soddie carpenters” could be found to advise and assist in constructing sod buildings. Except along creek banks, where a few cottonwood, willow and box elder trees grew, “seas” of prairie grass completely covered the prairies to the horizons.

Sometimes the seas of grass were temporarily coal-black due to periodic, lightening ignited, prairie fires. The prairie grasses, with their extensive root growth below the ground, could survive the fires but trees could not. The fires moved with lightening speed and did not raise the temperature of the soil enough to cause harm below the soil surface.

In the small schools where Mary Donohoe taught, she imparted her passionate love of the English language and literature to her young students. Typically, the students got away from their ranch homes for a modicum of schooling during the harsh winter months when it was too bleak and cold to work on their parent’s ranches.

Mary Donohoe was a comely young woman in the full bloom of life. She wore her dark, wavy hair in the fashionable short style of the day. She had a slightly elongated face with well-proportioned features, a strong jaw, narrow nose and soft lips. She had narrow hands with long slim fingers. Her expressions held a hint of dreaminess that concealed a highly developed intelligence and strong opinions. She was justifiably confident of herself and in her teaching capabilities.
Bill Lyons was a handsome, high spirited, affable young man with a ready smile and an expression that made him look like he was about to share a joke or a witty observation. He had dark hair, with a “cowlick” across his forehead and bushy eyebrows. He stood five feet - nine inches tall. He had a deep chest, broad square shoulders, and a well-muscled body from hard farm work. He was slightly deaf in one ear due to a horse bite.

During the evening, Bill danced several times with Mary Donohoe. They also went to several more dances the next few nights. Bill did not yet, however, do anything special to distinguish himself from Mary’s other suitor in Murdo. A slow romance developed between Mary and Bill with sporadic letter exchanges and visits. Eventually the other suitor fell to the wayside. Their visiting was often done with Bill and Mary being accompanied by a sister or brother. Their courtship went on for four years. Bill proposed marriage on New Year’s eve of 1926 and they were married 14 months later.

The Donohoe farm near Yankton, with its Victorian house, bunk house for single hired hands, separate house for the married hired man, barns and other farmstead buildings, was extensive for the times. The porch-encircled, house was a duplicate of the one built a few years earlier and left behind in Iowa, except the fireplace and kerosene lamps were omitted. They were replaced with central hot water heating and modern electric lighting. The house cost $5,000 to build. Mary’s father, James Donohoe, or “Mr. Donohoe”, as Bill Lyons and most others would always call him, was a good farmer and businessman who always had an eye for the latest technical developments and for sound business deals.

It required a lot of hired hands to operate the Donohoe farm. One was Chinese. On a cold day Grandma invited him to come into the warm, farmhouse kitchen to warm himself. He said, “Belly (very) cold, Missee!”
Grandma replied, “If your belly’s cold why don’t you put your shirt tail in!”

“Mr. Donohoe” determined that Yankton, a town of 6,000 people, did not have an adequate milk supply so he developed a dairy business with a herd of fifty Holstein cows and door-to-door horse and wagon milk delivery. He then installed an automatic milking machine and milk processing building. The milking machine eliminated the undesirable and tedious hand-milking chore. To milk fifty cows twice a day by hand was enough to develop hand muscles capable of crushing nuts without the use of nutcrackers. The milking machine was such a novelty that the town people drove out on Sunday afternoons to witness the progressive apparatus in action.

James Donohoe was six foot two inches tall with a flowing white mustache. His public mien was formal and dignified but to his family he always had a ready smile and a twinkle in his eyes. He looked like Oliver Wendell Holmes, the Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, as he appeared in schoolbooks. A local newspaper article written in 1928 remarked on Mr. Donohoe’s presence in Yankton County: “(He) takes an active part in business, civic, educational and social affairs of the community”.

To Mary, her father was a complete pushover. She always got what she wanted from him. Once he paid a hundred dollars, a small fortune at that time, for a seal skin coat for Mary. Her mother was not always pleased at his fawning indulgence of his loveable daughter. Her mother, another Mary (Mary Beecher Donohoe) was a sprightly, petite woman with a head of tightly curled hair. She wore flower-patterned dresses with lace collars. She looked like a model for a Dresden porcelain figurine. She seldom ate much. When she felt especially good she’d lift her skirts several inches and dance a few swirls of an Irish jig. Everyone said, “Grandma eats like a bird”.

Grandpa’s eating habits were “exotic”. He ate differently from anyone else. He took salt from a salt cellar on the side of his knife and “tapped” it onto his food. He poured his coffee into a saucer and sipped it from the edge. He mixed his food together on his plate and ate it from the edge of his knife. He could eat peas without them rolling off his knife by mixing them with mashed potatoes. He never put a fork in his mouth. It was not known if his method of food consumption was his own personal idiosyncrasy or if it was a proper custom from a bygone time. It was amusing to the grandchildren to see Grandpa maneuver his food past his mustache into his mouth.

An obvious question is why the Donohoes pulled up their roots at the “old age” of fifty-five from the Iowa community where they were born and moved to remote, sparsely settled South Dakota. The answer was openly divulged years later. Many of the Irish relatives in the Nolan Settlement of Johnson County, Iowa where they lived were not as prosperous or as well educated as the James Donohoe family and they had the deplorable Irish habit of “begrudging” those who achieved more success than they. James and Mary Donohoe were progressive people. When cars started to become available, they bought a 1910 Maxwell touring car. They could not drive it to Mass on Sundays because of the “begrudging” that it elicited from the “green eyed” relatives who could not afford such a luxury.

The Irish habit of “begrudging” can be well understood by the incident of two men – one American and one Irish – traveling down a road in Ireland. They came upon a prosperous farm with herds of pedigreed cattle and horses, the latest farm machinery, fine buildings and a well-dressed and well-fed family. The American said, “I will work hard and someday own a place like that!” The Irishman said “Someday I will ‘git’ those ‘bastids’.”

Finally the Donohoes had enough of this never-ending petty jealousy so they decided to move elsewhere. They
were also motivated by the need to find land that was more affordable for their rapidly maturing sons, should they decide to farm on their own. The Donohoes moved to several towns in quick succession and soon permanently settled near Yankton in southeastern South Dakota. They arrived with a sufficient bank account and credit to immediately buy and develop a large, one square mile farm. One of the criterion for James Donohoe’s new farm was that it be in a community where there was an active Knights of Columbus. An older community resident said, “James Donohoe was known as ‘Mr. Roman Catholic’ due to his involvement and interest in the church.”

They Donohoe family quickly made its social presence known among the younger people of Yankton with three handsome and energetic, unmarried sons, Will, Francis and Jack, and two eligible daughters, Ella and Ann. Mary, the youngest, was eleven years old. Mary wrote in her memoirs “My brothers made quite a splash. (They were) vivacious and good looking. The girls almost stampeded to meet them.”

The economic circumstances of the prosperous Donohoe family were in contrast to the Lyons family at that time. Earlier the Lyons family had experienced good times and prosperity when they successfully operated extensive farming operations among their many relatives near Madison in eastern central South Dakota. The Lyons family had lived in the Midwest most of the time since Jeremiah and Ellen (Whelan) Lyons emigrated from Ireland in the 1840’s. Bill Lyons father, Will, along with his brother Richard (Dick) F. Lyons led a 44 Irish settlers to the eastern part of the Dakota Territory in 1880 to settle on newly available prairie land that was still covered with virgin grasses. During the “good times”, Bill Lyons father and his mother, Catherine (Crossgrove) Lyons, owned farms that they operated with 50 to 60 horses and up to twenty hired hands. At times there were so many hired hands that their meals were prepared by
three hired girls and served them in three shifts. Some of the farming and other ventures were done in a partnership between Will and his older brother, Dick. People recognized Will Lyons for his “gift” to judge horses. He took railroad cars of trained horses as far away as Boston to sell. Will directed the hired hands on the farm while Dick tended to other related businesses in town. Because of his management skills, he was nicknamed “Boss”, a name used for the rest of his life even by his own children. At that time, the two Lyons brothers were energetic, entrepreneurial and ambitious. The economic conditions were good and their multiple farming and commercial ventures brought substantial success.

In 1900 the agricultural business conditions deteriorated. There was also a developing problem with “Boss” as he contracted the “Irish weakness” of too much alcohol consumption. His family encouraged him to “take the pledge” to stop drinking. “Pledges” were often taken with a special ceremony in the presence of the parish priest. Sometimes, “Boss” carried out the “pledge” with a certain amount of “flexibility” – not unlike the man who took “the pledge” and then went to his favorite bar and said to the bartender, “Give me a lemonade but, unknown to me, fortify it with a couple shots of whiskey.” Eventually “Bosse’s weakness” became controllable.

“Boss” and his family decided to move to Charles Mix County near Wagner, 100 miles south where land was available but with legal uncertainties due to earlier fraud by people posing as Indians who were entitled to free land. Bill was two years old at the time of the move. They found land to buy but were plagued for many years with legal disputes related to the fraud.

The living conditions on the new farm were “minimal.” Many years later Uncle Bob Lyons described their house as “three claim shanties shoved together but filled with a lot of love”. The shanties were left over from the homesteading times in the late 1800’s. The farmland was marginally
productive due to low rainfall. The grandparents made a living on the new farm but they never prospered again.

At the time of Bill and Mary’s courtship eight children remained in the Lyons family after five had died in childhood. Three sons still lived at home, Bill the eldest, Tom and young Bob. Bill virtually operated the farm. Bill’s sister Mary also lived at home and taught school in a neighborhood one-room schoolhouse. Older brothers Jim and Jerry, and sister Ann had moved away from home to pursue non-farm-related professions. In later years Francis would vividly remember the Lyons grandparent’s house during summer visits because of the bleak, mournful moaning of the hot, dry, dust laden wind as it blew through the fly covered screens. A few years after Bill and Mary’s marriage the Lyons grandparent’s lost the farm due to defaulting on payment of a small farm loan. The community in the 1930’s was sometimes defined as the 3D’s, “dust, drought and default”.

In spite of the hardscrabble existence at the Lyons farm, there was an atmosphere of learning, religious zeal, and humor. There was a strong interest in the affairs of the community and confidence that life could be improved upon. The Lyons household was somewhat of a matriarchal domain as was often the tendency in Irish families. Grandma Lyons was a serious, bright, well-read woman with extensive knowledge that she emphatically, and sometimes imperiously, imparted to her family and people in the community. They came to her for advice and counsel. They also depended on her to prepare and lay out the dead for burial - a task that had to be improvised in those days. She served on the local school board. She would give speeches any time she was requested to do so. Grandma had a curios mind. Her confident manner recalls that of her contemporary, William Gladstone, the Prime Minister of Great Britain. Queen Victoria said of him, “Gladstone talks to me as if he were speaking to a public meeting.” A standard line used in old-fashioned newspapers about community leaders could
apply to her, “She was informed of the progress of events.” She imparted her zeal for learning and self-improvement to her many visiting grandchildren. Francis remembers as a small child asking her a question about the workings of a fountain pen. She said, “I do not know but we’ll look it up.” She made it clear that she did not expect anyone in her family to spend their lives “aimlessly riding up and down county roads on their hobby horses”. As a young woman Grandma Lyons taught school in Wisconsin and South Dakota. People who knew her as a younger woman said she could be found in her kitchen stirring a pot while holding a child on her hip and reading a book.

The geographic boundaries of Bill’s world were limited. The farthest he had ever traveled from home was to the World War I, military induction center in Des Moines, IA. He was inducted into the army on November 10, 1918. The next day word was received that an armistice had been signed in Europe ending the carnage of the four-year war. The war was billed by President Woodrow Wilson and others as “The war to end all wars!” Little did they know of the horrible encore that was to come two decades later! The next day after the armistice, Bill was released from his military obligations and sent back home to his parent’s farm.

World War I took the lives of over twenty million people followed a few months later by the worldwide Spanish flu epidemic that took another twenty million people. The Lyons and Donohoe families were blessed to escape from both of these tragedies with no losses of life.

In later years the Lyons children asked Mary Donohoe’s elder sister, Ann, what “Grandma” and “Grandpa” Donohoe’s reaction was to this young man, Bill Lyons, who came courting their youngest and fairest daughter. His limited economic circumstances and comparatively incomplete education could have been a considerable roadblock. Ann said when they found out Bill was from a ”good Irish Catholic family” that was good enough for them. Never the less, their
evolving opinion of Bill became more favorable when they witnessed his considerable natural charm and they learned of his proven farming capabilities. Bill also had to win over the three Donohoe sons who coddled and watched over Mary like a trio of mothering hens. They soon accepted Bill as a worthy and serious courtier of Mary.

During their courtship, Bill, Mary and several friends made a 450-mile vacation trip across the state to the Black Hills. The arduous trip, by car, was made on roads that were one step above buffalo trails. Mary’s brother, Francis Donohoe, was included in the party. He was to function as the family chaperone for Mary. He was an accomplished “character” and “cut-up” so he probably was of dubious value as a chaperone. He liked pranks. He and his friends once dismantled a neighbor’s buggy, hoisted it one piece at a time to the roof of the barn and then reassembled it for the farmer to find the next morning.

In later years Uncle Francis Donohoe could always be counted on by his nieces and nephews for his antics and entertainment. At church he often feigned no notice of them but as he walked by their pew he mischievously flicked holy water on them. Bill and Mary had a party for Uncle Francis to celebrate his engagement to Ruth Moore. As the guests sat around the dining room table, Uncle Francis received his “engagement presents”. First he opened a package that contained a pair of oversized pink ladies panties which he wrapped around his head in turban fashion. He then opened a package that contained a water pistol and used it to douse everyone at the party with beer siphoned from his glass. He and Ruth, with their sonorous schoolteacher voices, made the room reverberate with infectious laughter.

Mary’s brother, Jack Donohoe, soon developed a close relationship with Bill. Jack did not always conduct his life according to the strict standards and expectations of the senior Donohoes. He was sometimes at considerable odds with his mother. Jack wanted to shield Bill from the
possibility of also becoming at odds with the Donohoes due to his impecunious circumstances so he loaned Bill the money necessary to purchase an engagement ring for Mary. This became known many years later when a cherished, penciled letter from Jack to Mary was found. The letter had been tucked away for 70 years in Mary’s dresser drawer.

During Bill and Mary’s courtship, they frequently attended dances, often with music provided by Lawrence Welk who led a local band called “The Hawaiian Juicy Fruit Band”. The band performed live at WNAX (at 570 on the dial), the pioneer radio station in Yankton. Other musical performers at WNAX were “Clarence Cowman and the Hayshakers” and “Happy Jack and the Old Timers.” “Whoopee John Wohlfahrt and the Polka Band”, could be tuned in from more distant stations. Radio stations broadcast live music because quality recorded music was not yet available. Lawrence Welk owned a well-used Ford bus that transported the band around South Dakota and Nebraska performing at country-dances. To many “sophisticated people”, the later Lawrence Welk television programs and his German accented dialogue were a target of ridicule but Bill and Mary held him in high esteem because of their fond memories of dancing to his music.

A memento from the State Fire Tournament dance where Bill and Mary first met was a small, engraved bronze bell with printing on it to define the occasion. Mary kept it in a prominent place with her cherished possessions for many years and made certain that it passed on to Jack, Bill and Mary’s fourth son, for continued safe keeping when she died.

Mary had a passably good voice that she used for singing at weddings. Later during the raising of the Lyons family, music was always talked about and taught to those who showed any interest and talent. Mary’s upright piano always stood prominently in the farmhouse living room.

The rash of electrical and recording inventions by Thomas Edison started to make music broadly available.
Some of the popular songs at that time were: “Alexander’s Ragtime Band”, “A Good Man is Hard to Find”; “A’int Misbehav’n” and “St. Louis Blues.”

During the “Roaring Twenties” the fast flapper set danced “The Charleston.” Ira Gershwin wrote “Rhapsody in Blue” and introduced it at a concert billed as “Experiment in Modern Music.” Rogers and Hammerstein wrote, “Make Believe” and “Why do I Love You.” Hammerstein and Kern wrote “Ol’ Man River” for a play entitled “Showboat.” Mae West was arrested for “corrupting the morals of youth” because she “moved her navel up and down and from right to left” in a belly dance and recited naughty lines like “When women go wrong - men go right after them.”

Movies were still “silent films” such as, ”The Gold Rush” with the masterful clown Charlie Chaplin and “The General” with Buster Keaton – both humorous classics.

The newspaper headlines read, “Knute Rockne (of Notre Dame) Perfects the Forward Pass”, “Ford Pays Workers Six Dollars a Day for Forty Hour Work Week” and “Lucky Lindy Hops Over The Atlantic.”

Herbert Hoover won the presidential election in 1928 helped by the slogan that promised, “There will be a chicken in every pot and a car in every garage!” Richard Byrd flew over the North Pole. Babe Ruth hit his 60th home run. Clarence Darrow defended John Scopes when he was ordered by the state of Tennessee to desist from teaching anything that denies the story of “the divine creation of man.”

Bill and Mary married in Sacred Heart Church in Yankton on February 20, 1928 in a simple wedding ceremony, officiated by Father Link, followed by a wedding dinner at the Donohoe farm. The Yankton Press and Dakotan reported that the bride was “a young woman of charming personality and very popular among her large circle of acquaintances”. The same article went on to say:
The bride, attired in a becoming costume of Dutch blue georgette, with accessories to match, was attended by her sister Ann Donohue, a teacher at the high school at Vermilion. The latter wore an attractive costume of navy blue crepe. The bride carried a shower bouquet of roses and sweet peas, while her attendant’s bouquet was roses and carnations. Tom Lyons, brother of the groom, of Wagner, acted as best man. Miss Rose Adams [a friend] played the wedding march, from Lohengren. During the ceremony, Francis Donohue, brother of the bride played, O Sole Mio, as a violin solo and vocal solos were rendered by John Walsh [a friend] who sang Ave Maria and Sacred Heart Hymn.

A wedding party dinner was held at the Donohoe farm. Bill and Mary then drove to Sioux City to board a train for their honeymoon trip to Kansas City.

And so, Bill and Mary were off to a wonderful lifelong relationship that would fulfill their dreams.
DESCENDENTS AND FOREBEARS
Of
WILLIAM AND MARY

Robert Francis (Bob) Lyons (twin)
  (1937 - )
Elizabeth Ann (Betty or Susan) Lyons (twin)
  (1937 – 1992)
Thomas Anthony (Tom) Lyons
  (1936 - )
John Albert (Jack) Lyons
  (1934 - )
Eugene Thomas (Gene) Lyons
  (1931 - )
Francis William (Frank) Lyons
  (1930 - )
Patrick Joseph (Pat) Lyons
  (1928 - )

William Francis Lyons
  (1899 – 1960)
Mary Carmelita Donohoe
  (1898 – 1991)

William Lyons
  -  Catherine Crossgrove
  (1861-1943)  (1865 – 1949)
James Donohoe
  -  Mary Beecher
  (1857-1946) (1856- 1956)

Jeremiah Lyons
  -  Ellen Whelen
  (1819-1894) (1821 – 1889)
  (Born in Ireland)
Michael Donohoe
  -  Ellen Peters
  (1834 – 1918)
  (Born in Ireland)
Bill Lyons at Columbus College, Sioux Falls, SD (in football uniform) Circa 1917

Mary Donohoe as a Teenager Circa 1916

Donohoe Farmstead North of Yankton Circa 1916
James and Mary Donohoe (Grandpa and Grandma)
Circa 1936
Will and Kate Lyons (Grandpa and Grandma)

Circa 1924
Mary Donohoe and her siblings – Back row, Ella, Jack and Francis. Front row, Mary, Ann and Will. Nolan Settlement, Johnson County, Iowa Circa 1899
Will, Jack, Mary (Grandma), Ann, James (Grandpa), Ella and Francis Donohoe – Johnson County, Iowa 1911
Mary Donohoe’s childhood home in Johnson Co. Iowa

1911

Sod house with cow on the roof in South Dakota
(Not a family picture)

Circa 1880
Wedding present from James and Mary Donohoe 1928

Mary Donohoe
Circa 1921

Bill and Mary’s wedding 1928
Bill Lyons and his siblings. Top row – Dennis, Jim, Jerry And Bill. Bottom row – Mary, Ann, Tom and Bob.
Circa 1936
“The Prairie Is My Garden” - Painting by Harvey T. Dunn
Eastern Dakota Territory in the late 1800’s at the time of arrival of the Lyons family.
AFTER Bill and Mary returned from their week long wedding trip to Kansas City, the farthest either of them had ever been away from home, they rented a 160-acre farm near Wagner, South Dakota for one year.

They got off to a good start in married life. The Donohoes gave them a 1928 Dodge coupe for a wedding present. Mr. Donohoe explained "A Dodge costs more but it won’t nickel and dime you". The Lyons family gave them a team of horses name Pat and Pete. Later Grandma Lyons would say, “I despair to think of all of the years of hard work done by Bill - he virtually ran our farm - and all he got for it was a team of horses”. Bill and Mary bought some new household items, such as an ice box, a kitchen stove and kitchen cabinet. Their big extravagance was a new, walnut William and Mary style dining room set supplied from Will Donohoe’s furniture store for $200. Other furniture came from the large, amply stocked Donohoe attic. The Donohoe’s regularly replaced their household possessions with the latest fashions while still husbanding the old for possible future use. They bought other furniture at second hand auction sales.

At dusk several weeks after Bill and Mary started their new lives together on the rented farm, a great din arose in the farmyard as neighbors, relatives and friends arrived for a chivaree. A chivaree is a rural tradition where a kind of
mock wedding is enacted accompanied by horn blowing and pounding on kettles and pans. Relatives and friends planned the chivaree and brought along food and drink. The main “dish” was wieners served from a heated wash boiler. It was a time of teasing, laughter and merriment. According to Mary’s memoirs, “Hordes of people [came to the chivaree] all wanting to get a good look at the ‘woman’ that Bill Lyons chose [to marry].” At chance meetings throughout the community for the next couple of weeks friends recalled the chivaree.

The marriage of Bill and Mary quickly became an ideal relationship of love, respect and admiration for each other. When they prepared for going out for an evening, they seemed almost giddy in each other’s company as they shared a cigarette or a drink. A few years later their children learned that Bill’s unrestrained wrath would descend on them if they ever said or did anything to Mary’s detriment. The children could not recall ever hearing Bill and Mary speak a harsh word to each other even in times of stress.

The marriage was soon rewarded by the birth of Patrick Joseph on November 8, 1928. He would be called Pat - or P.J. Pat was a beautiful baby who immediately received the admiring attention of Bill and Mary and numerous relatives. As the firstborn child he would always hold a special place in Mary’s heart.

After one year of living near Wagner, Bill and Mary moved to Utica, South Dakota, twenty miles west of Yankton, where they rented another farm. Their hired man, Joe Quinn, moved with them. This move brought them closer to the Donohoes.

During the first two years of Bill and Mary’s marriage, Grandpa Donohoe looked for a more substantial farm that might be purchased for them in the Yankton area. He also carefully watched the development of his new son-in-law’s farm management capabilities. From long farming and business experience Grandpa knew that providing a gift of a
business or farm that was beyond its owner’s capability to manage would certainly be a disservice that would ultimately lead to failure.

Grandpa found an available farm that he thought would be appropriate. It was located three and a half miles east of Yankton and five miles from the Donohoe farm. The farm was on rich, sandy, river-bottom land in the valley formed by the confluence of the James and Missouri rivers. The land was “flat as a pancake” with every square foot fertile and tillable. A spacious ten-room house with two porches, two large barns, a hog house, chicken house and other buildings for grain storage and special farm needs stood on the farm. Extensive shade trees, windbreak trees and orchards surrounded the farm buildings. Several wells and a cistern for soft water (supplied from the house roof during rains) provided an ample water supply. Willowdale, a one room school house, was located a “stones throw” from the farmhouse. Access to the farm was via a narrow, rutted, dirt road.

Grandpa Donohoe purchased the farm in 1929 and made a gift to Bill and Mary of the down payment of $6,000. Without the Donohoe’s financial assistance, ownership of a farm of this size and quality would not have been possible until much later in Bill and Mary’s lives after years of diligent saving. To Bill the farm seemed like the “land of milk and honey” after his previous life on the harsh, windblown, treeless prairie.

Ben Schlaefli, a Swiss immigrant, built the farm. In several places on the farm there was evidence of Mr. Schlaefli’s boyhood home in Switzerland such as orchards, a shady grape arbor in front of the house and facilities to produce and store foods necessary for his own family and that also could be profitably sold on the market. One of the buildings near the main house was used for processing honey from Mr. Schlaefli’s beehives. The building had recently replaced a log house that could be seen in older
farmyard pictures. The Schlaefli’s called it the “bee house”. The Lyons called it the “old house”. The rough, red granite walled basement of the main house was designed to store potatoes that Mr. Schlaefli grew commercially.

Mr. Schlaefli had recently fallen over dead at the farmhouse gate as he came in for his evening meal. His widow wanted to quickly sell the farm and move to town. In spite of new owners, the farm would be known for many years as the “Schlaefli place”.

The one and a half story farmhouse had been built in three stages. The original stage, with four rooms, had a narrow stairs to the second floor – later to be called the “back stairs”. The original house was constructed with square nails. The newest addition contained a grander staircase off the living room. The second floor, with its sloped ceilings, would always give a feeling of comfort and coziness. The house was built with little regard for internal traffic flow. It was necessary to pass through rooms to gain access to adjacent rooms. The house was developed for serving the needs of a large family and for providing comfort for its occupants. It fulfilled its purpose well.

The purchase price for the 120-acre farm was $175 per acre. With the soon to occur stock market crash, the world wide economic collapse and the great drought of the 1930’s, the farm could not have been bought at a worse time. Mrs. Schlaefli reduced some of the installment payments for the farm during the severest time of the depression. Repossessing a farm for default of payments would have served no purpose. Farms were virtually worthless and hard to sell. With the low crop prices it was not even possible to earn enough to pay the taxes. Corn prices fell so low that some people used it for fuel because it was cheaper than wood.

At Christmas time in 1933, in the depth of the depression when the Prince Albert tobacco can that served as the family money coffer was empty, Bill and Mary
acquired three used metal toy trucks for a few cents. They repainted them red and gave them to the three boys for Christmas presents. Mary saw a benefit in the trucks being identical because the children would not have a basis to fight over them. Her memoirs say, “I was wrong about the trucks because the children found that they had slightly different colored wheels. They used this as the basis for fighting over possession of the toys.”

The proximity of the newly purchased Lyons farm to the Donohoe farm provided lots of opportunity for visiting. One of the pleasures of the grandchildren when they visited the Donohoe grandparents was to play on the hitching rail outside of the kitchen door. It was 42 inches off the ground and long enough to tie up to ten horses. The horses were tied to the rail to rest while the farm hands ate their noonday meal. The rail allowed for an unlimited number of children to play “trapeze artist” at the same time.

Another pleasure was to stay all night at the Donohoe farm, especially in the summer, when the aunts, Ann and Ella, were home. They liked to indulge the children. They let them run on the long narrow porch until they were red in the face and ready to drop from exhaustion. It seemed that many things were done “differently” at the Donohoe house. Everyone wore “going to town” clothes even when they worked. Grandpa did his business paper work in an office room by his enormous cast iron safe rather than at the kitchen table. They wrote checks in “ledger type” checkbooks rather than the short, compact ones that others used. The ladies did not like flies in the house. Several times a day they opened the doors, formed a line and shooed the flies out with flapping towels. The house always had the aroma of freshly baked bread and pastries. Children have a keen capacity to notice small differences such as these and to compare them to their own domestic life.

Of course during this time in Bill and Mary’s life, events other than the Great Depression were also going on in the
country. Popular songs were being written such as: *Brother Can You Spare a Dime; I Surrender Dear; Hooray for Love; I'm Gonna Sit Down and Write Myself a Letter*; and *This Land is Your Land*. At the Cotton Club in Harlem, New York, the sophisticated and masterful Duke Ellington was starting to write and play music that would initiate the “Age of Swing.”

A record player, called a *Victrola* or *Edison*, which was as big as a refrigerator, stood in a corner of the living room on the farm. On occasion, when visitors were present, they rolled up the rug for dancing to the tinny, warbly music from the hand wound *Victrola*. The thick records seemed as heavy as cast iron skillets to a child.

Movies quickly converted from silent films to “talkies” such as the humorous, *Night at the Opera* - with the Marx brothers; *Modern Times* - starring Charlie Chaplin and *I'm No Angel* - with “pneumatic” and irreverent Mae West. Bill and Mary occasionally attended the movies on their infrequent nights out. They marveled at the technology of the “new fangled talkies.” They had seen their first “talkie”, *The Al Jolson Story*, while on their honeymoon in Kansas City.

The political issues of the 1930’s were mostly related to the paralyzing depression and the drought but other events were also occurring such as: the passing of the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act which restricted trade and inadvertently intensified the depression; the creation of Mickey Mouse by a young cartoonist named Walt Disney; the completion of the 100-story Empire State Building in New York City; the start of a comic strip featuring iron-jawed Dick Tracy and his sweetheart, Tess Trueheart; the election of polio-stricken, ebullient, Franklin Delano Roosevelt as president and the initiation of his whirlwind frenzy of “New Deal” programs; the introduction of the sturdy Douglas DC-3 airplane that would revolutionize passenger air travel; the beginning of improvement for black Americans as demonstrated when by Jessie Owen set speed records at the Berlin Olympics-
much to the embarrassment of racist Adolph Hitler; the St. Valentine’s Day massacre; and the gunning down of bank robbing Bonnie and Clyde (John Dillinger said of them, “They were punks. They gave bank robbing a bad name.”)

For Bill and Mary, moving to the new farm was the beginning of a lifetime of achievement, happiness and fulfillment. The farm was to become the “family seat” for Bill and Mary and their, about to burgeon, family. They never considered moving elsewhere because this farm served all of their needs. It was their home and a place of great joy. It was a place for them to grow into full maturity. It was a place where their children would learn and develop the foundations that would serve them for life.
Initial statement for farm equipment and household goods – Setting up new farm and home in Wagner, SD 1928

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seed and Heavy Hardware,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture, Harness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Farm Implements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Collector</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>45.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 x 8 Gutters</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barn Door</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 1/2 x Window</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 1/2 x Window</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>175.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 x 8 Window</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>175.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 x 8 Window</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>175.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 x 8 Gutter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 1/2 x Window</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 1/2 x Window</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>175.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 x 8 Window</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>175.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 x 8 Window</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>175.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>426.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The total amount for the initial statement is $426.85.
Map with Lyons and Donohoe Farms – Yankton County, South Dakota Circa 1935
Lyons Farmhouse – Front View                          Circa 1935

Lyons Farmhouse – Rear View                          Circa 1935
Lyons Farm Yard Driveway                                    Circa 1936

After the Presidential Election – Herbert Hoover Out –
Franklin Rossevelt In                                        1933
Hey, Wait For Me! Pat, Francis and Gene. Circa 1933

Straw Hats! Pat, Francis, and Gene Circa 1933

Ready To Go To Church! Pat, Francis, Gene and Bill
with Jacky Circa 1935

Mary, Bill, Francis and Pat Circa 1931
CHAPTER FOUR

THE GREAT DEPRESSION
(1932 to 1937)

THE Great Depression was the dominant event of the 1930’s. It overwhelmingly influenced the lives of Bill and Mary as it did most Americans. The Midwest received a “triple whammy” because The Great Depression was combined with an unprecedented drought, hoards of grass hoppers and blinding, searing dust storms.

The devastating consequences of the Great Depression cannot be adequately understood by people who did not live through it any more than the horrors of wars can be understood by non-combatants. It was not just a time of belt tightening and waiting for good times to return. It was a time of hunger, severe deprivation, hopelessness, bankruptcy, loss of all accumulated assets and erosion of confidence in the free enterprise system. It was a time of bank closings with customers being deprived, overnight, of every dime they possessed. It was a time of foreclosures on homes and farms. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (F.D.I.C.) that insures bank deposits today was not yet in existence. For many it was such a devastating psychological experience that they could not cope. It was not uncommon for men to abandon their families, commit suicide, or to go into deep psychological depressions. The long duration of the depression made it a way of life for a generation of people. Even after the depression ended some people were
too scarred to ever resume a normal life. Few of today’s “social safety nets” for the needy existed in the early 1930’s.

Some Americans thought Russia, since its 1917 revolution and conversion to communism, was developing a workable, utopian plan for providing their social, economic and political systems. They believed that because the capitalistic system of the US was faltering, it should be abandoned and replaced with the Russian system. The horrors of the revolutionary Russian system were not yet known in the west. Lincoln Steffens, upon returning from a “sanitized and controlled” trip to Russia said, “I have been over in the future, and it works!”

Early in the depression, the Federal Government, led by Herbert Hoover, could not come to grips with the country’s rapidly collapsing economic and social institutions. There was no model to follow for a debacle of such magnitude. The government was paralyzed. It was incapable of developing urgently needed plans and decisive action. The country was in despair. Instead of offering action and hope, the government recited platitudes such as “Prosperity is just around the corner”.

In 1933, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was inaugurated as President of the U.S. He immediately took vigorous, “tree shaking” action on all fronts of the government to radically rebuild the country’s collapsing economic and social systems. He gave the country hope with his jaunty, confident presence in the White House. He understood how to use the radio to communicate to the American people with his periodic “fireside radio chats”, broadcast from his family’s ancestral home on the Hudson River. The measured tones of his cultivated and confident voice made most people feel that their government was now in good hands.

President Roosevelt traveled a road strewn with obstacles. The entrenched “status quo” politicians did not easily give way to his recovery programs that they saw as socialistic, radical and a betrayal of the established
principles of self-reliance upon which the country was built. The new programs soon started to provide relief for the dire needs of the people but final resolution of the depression did not come until the late 1930’s and early 1940’s at the advent of World War II.

In spite of the severe economic difficulties, Bill and Mary managed to hang on to the ownership of their farm. Millions of farmers in the country were less fortunate. Bill’s own parents lost their farm in 1937 because they could not pay their small bank loan of $1600 to the Federal Land Bank. They had paid for their home farm earlier but they used it as collateral to buy another cattle pasture farm. When they could not make the loan payments on the new farm they had to forfeit both of them. They never recovered and had to live the rest of their lives on the meager largess of their children. This heart-rendering story became a litany for despair throughout the Midwest. Mary often said that everyone else was in the same boat during the depression of the 1930’s so there was no feeling of personal inadequacy for being in such rocky economic straits.

There were few opportunities for earning extra money to supplement the virtually non-existent farm income but one did arise for Bill for a brief period of time. The county undertook a road improvement project to provide ditches and higher crowns to the rudimentary dirt roads near the farm. Bill worked on the road crew. He brought along a team of horses and a “fresnoe”. A “fresnoe” is a dirt scraper with a flat cutting edge and a capacity of about one cubic yard of earth. It skids along the ground as the dirt is hauled to its destination. For a long day’s work, he and the horses earned $5.00. At a time when people stood in line to find work for a dollar per day this amount of money was like manna from heaven.

Uncle Bob Lyons who was in his teens during the 1930’s signed up for the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corp), one of President Roosevelt’s ”alphabet soup” relief programs
designed to invigorate the economy. He worked in the Black Hills of western South Dakota building mountain roads, recreational areas and resort hotels. For this he was paid $21.00 per month. A portion of this meager wage was deducted from his pay by the paymaster and sent directly home to his parents. Some of the CCC participants started to receive “square meals” and to live in clean, orderly quarters for the first time in many years.

Although it was common for people to poke fun at the inefficiency, low quality and poor management of the CCC’s, WPA (Works Progress Administration) and other “make work” government programs, the criticism was largely unwarranted. The programs provided positive results and they did start the trickle of cash, and perhaps a little hope, back into the paralyzed economy. Seventy-five year-old sidewalks, roads, resorts, and structures built by the “WPA” still exist and show evidence of the high quality of the work. Work opportunities for intellectuals, writers and artists were also provided. Libraries still stock their shelves with books by writers funded by the W.P.A. The Yankton City Hall, including its murals, was a WPA project.

Some businesses failed during the depression because it was no longer socially acceptable for affluent people, who were financially shielded from the Great Depression, to display their wealth. Those who could still afford costly, racy, custom bodied Dusenbergs and stylish, three ton, V-12 Pierce-Arrows bought boxy Buicks and stodgy Chryslers instead. The luxury automobile industry in the U.S. disappeared. Opulent living had to be confined behind closed doors. The excesses of the wealthy, as disclosed in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*, were over. Wealth was not as much fun if it could not be publicly flouted!

During the Great Depression, life was especially hard on young people. Many were deprived of an education because of the lack of money. But if there was enough determination for self-improvement, a way was sometimes
found. Bill’s nephew James Lyons arrived at the farmhouse door in the mid-1930’s. He had driven 25 cattle 110 miles from his father’s ranch in south central South Dakota to market and sold them for a few dollars, worked until the farmer for whom he worked “dried out” (crops burned due to drought), and hitchhiked and walked another 60 miles. James was a cheerful young man with an indomitable spirit. Bill and Uncle Francis Donohoe hired him as a farm hand for 75 cents per day. They put his wages in an education fund. At the end of the farm season, Mary and Uncle Francis took James to a nearby Southern Normal College in Springfield, South Dakota and watched him as he placed his money on the registrar’s table. James said, “I want to enroll but this is all I have”. The superintendent arranged a work-study program for him so he could start his college education. Although the depression broke the spirit of some people, it toughened up James and many others so that nothing in their lives would ever again seem insurmountable.

James’ father, Uncle Dennis Lyons, was a pioneer settler of Rosebud County, South Dakota – a remote location on the South Dakota prairies. In 1910, at the age of 21, he drove to Rosebud County with his new 16-year-old bride, the daughter of a blacksmith, and three horse-drawn freight wagons of goods. Dennis, his father, and his little brother, Bill Lyons (of this book), who was no more than a boy drove the three teams of horses. For $1600 and a $6 donation to an Indian welfare fund, Uncle Dennis bought a “relinquishment” and, with high hopes for a prosperous future, started his adult life as rancher. A “relinquishment” resulted when the original homesteader abandoned the land.

In 1933, Uncle Dennis, in the Irish writing tradition, found the words to poignantly describe the Great Depression in his county:

Finally in the ever-onward march of time, I find myself almost to the quarter century (point) of development of
this county. [I live] with the dreams of 25 years vanished, with fancy’s pictures faded, with youth gone and age here, with economic disaster spreading despair in its wake, [and] with drought and grasshoppers making the land uninhabitable. But from the human heart springs hope eternal, and in the active hours of daylight with sober logic born of experience, I can see again a future, as I know history has always repeated itself. But in the evening ‘Between the daylight and darkness, when comes the pause in life’s occupation’ a still [quiet] voice whispers to me, ‘Backward turn backward, Oh time in your flight.

Uncle Dennis lived for many years in desperate economic circumstances that did not allow him to fully develop his intellectual talents. His plight could be described with a line from the poetry of Thomas Gray: "Full many a flower is born to blush unseen and waste its sweetness on the desert [prairie] air."

Even though the Great Depression hung over Bill and Mary like a pall, they shielded their children from most of its stresses and hardships. For the children, growing up on the farm during the depression was a happy, easygoing experience. Life seemed normal.
Parched Earth in South Dakota!
Photo by Arthur Rothstein) 1936
Trying To Make a Living!
(Photo by Arthur Rothstein)
Destitute, Homeless and Hopeless (Photo by R. Lee) 1936

Facing A Dust Storm (Photo by Arthur Rothstein) 1936
BY the early 1940’s, Bill and Mary settled into a more routine and less stressful period of their lives. They had learned to cope with their large family and comfortably wear the mantle of parental authority. The children regarded Bill and Mary as the ultimate authority figures and assumed they had the power to make things right whenever required. They did not think a problem could arise which they could not handle. Bill and Mary had learned how to give adequate attention to each child to make them feel individually important and worthwhile.

The disastrous agricultural drought finally ended. World War II stimulated the economy thus ending the Great Depression. They fully settled into the family and community activities that would hold their interest and attention for the rest of their lives together.

Bill and Mary were members of the Democratic Party. They inherited their party affiliation from their families. Bill’s uncle, Dick Lyons, and mother, Catherine, were active in the Democratic Party. Uncle Dick was the Chairman of the State Democratic Party. He was a leader in promoting legislation granting statehood to South Dakota and North Dakota and writing the South Dakota state constitution. The party had high confidence in Uncle Dick. It selected him as its delegate to go to Washington to meet with President Cleveland to
discuss subjects of concern to South Dakota. Grandma Lyons was involved in local politics and served on the local school board. They were both strong, vocal partisans for causes espoused by the Democratic Party and issues beneficial to South Dakota.

Bill taught the children at an early age to memorize the names of key political officials, especially if they were Democrats. He was particularly pleased when they learned to recite the names of Democratic Governor, Tom Berry (a rancher) and President Franklin Roosevelt to visitors.

Farmers usually operated their farms on credit when they bought major supplies and livestock. In the fall Bill customarily put on his “going to town clothes” and set out to see his friend Jimmy Lloyd, president of the American State Bank. They first discussed rural agricultural markets, prices and predictions of future conditions. Bill then signed a bank note for the money he needed to buy feeder cattle for the season. The notes were written to fall due in the spring and early summer of the following year when the fattened cattle would be shipped to market. When Bill came home from the bank visits he was usually in an expansive mood and he liked to relate the details of his conversation with Jimmy Lloyd.

Farm credit could be an insidious taskmaster. When the economy and weather were stable, credit allowed for an expanded scale of operations and prosperity to farm families. When unforeseen and uncontrollable circumstances arose, if could be a demon and destroyer of years of accomplishments as happened to many people during the Great Depression.

Bill was a strong advocate and leader for the local and county 4-H clubs. 4-H clubs were for the purpose of teaching children farm-related subjects and developing self-reliance. The four H’s stand for head, heart, hands and health. The boys clubs were built around projects for learning animal and crop husbandry. The girl’s clubs focused on home
economics projects. The boys were expected to raise animals and crops and keep comprehensive records of feed, costs and results. The girls were expected to raise gardens, can food, bake and sew clothing. In some instances the girls also raised livestock.

At the end of the summer the 4-H club projects were taken to county "Achievement Days" shows for judging and evaluation. The club members also attended animal and crop judging seminars. Sometime the winners then took their projects to the next step - the State Fair in Huron. It was great fun to go to the State Fair to competitively show projects, meet other young people, and to sleep in the barracks provided for the fair exhibitors.

The Lyons boys usually undertook 4-H projects with Hereford (Whiteface) cattle. Whitefaces were beautiful animals with red bodies, white faces, wavy body hair and curly white tail hair. They were Bill’s favorite breed. One of the items on the judge’s checklist was grooming. The animal’s bodies were washed and their hair curried and trimmed before shows. Tails were shampooed with the best available bathing products and curled. Hoofs and horns were polished and shined with a coat of linseed oil. Throughout the year, horns were weighted with lead so they would grow downward in a gentle, attractive curve. When animals become excited at the shows they are prone to nervous and vigorous “discharges” – often on their own fresh grooming or on nearby animals, equipment and show participants. What a mess!

Bill gave generously of his time and management talent for the affairs of the 4-H Clubs. He was active in constructing permanent buildings in Yankton for the summer Achievement Days meets. After Bill’s death people often said to Mary, “It isn’t the same without Bill Lyons overseeing the needs of the 4-H clubs.”

Rural property was at severe risk due to lack of fire fighting equipment and services. Bill was a leader in
establishing a private subscription, Rural Volunteer Fire Cooperative for Yankton County. A subscription, at a cost of $500 to the Fire Cooperative, gave the member rights to the use of a fire truck, equipment and fire fighting services when a fire occurred. A dilemma, that was never fully resolved, was whether or not the Fire Cooperative should put out fires on the property of non-subscribers. At a later time the county was divided into numerical coordinates to better define the location of fires when calls were made to the Fire Cooperative - but it was hard to break the old ways. Pat called to report a tractor fire and gave his newly assigned coordinates. After a long, uncertain silence by the dispatcher Pat finally said, ”The tractor is on fire in the field east of the Willowdale School.” The dispatcher then knew exactly where to send the fire truck.

Bill dreaded uncontrolled fires because he knew how devastating they could be to remote farms in areas where there was no fire protection service. He knew of his brother Dennis’ terrifying experience during a prairie fire as he tried to save his livestock and then huddled with his family in his tornado cellar while the fire roared and rampaged over his ranch. During the fire, sixty-five neighborhood horses crowded against a barbed wire fence and died. Bill never went to bed in the evening when a fire had been burning during the day until he first went outside for a last minute check to ensure that the fire was extinguished.

Francis vividly remembers riding along a country rode with his aunt, Ann Lyons, when they came upon a rural house on fire. He recalls the owner, Mrs. Hollenbeck, frantically waving them down with a dishtowel. Nothing could be done to help her as they watched her family’s house burn to the ground. Even though Francis was only five years old he understood that a terrible thing had happened and he knew the family was in for a tough time.

Bill’s social consciousness and volunteerism for the 4-H Clubs, the school board, and the fire department instilled in
his children an example and an incentive for them to volunteer for community service. The reason for Bill’s patronage of certain down-at-the-heels businesses and hiring of marginal people became clear to the children when they realized what a soft spot Bill had for the underdogs.

A hazard in the neighborhood between the James and Missouri Rivers was periodic flooding. The floods resulted from fast melting upriver snow and spring rains combined with ice jams. The Lyons farm and buildings were on a slightly higher elevation from the surrounding farmland so there was seldom a “flood scare”. However, in 1952 a major flood did develop that threatened the farm. Bill and Mary decided that the rapidly mounting flood risk must be dealt with. They evacuated all of the livestock, put the household goods and furniture upstairs and abandoned the farm. By that time the water had completely surrounded the farm, so Bill, Mary and Kilroy, the dog, left in a boat and motored down the flooded roads to the higher elevations of Yankton. The children had left earlier. The water flooded the farmland and lapped at the Lyons house yard perimeter but did not enter the house. With hindsight it seemed like an adventure, but to the neighbors who had to clean up the devastation in their homes, it was a sad and costly event. The wood in flooded houses becomes warped and can never be properly restored.

The U.S. Corp of Engineers built a series of massive earthen dams across the Missouri River in South Dakota, North Dakota and Montana in the 1950’s. These dams provided multiple benefits of electricity generation, recreation facilities, wildlife refuges, and flood control. They were costly to build but they provided an economic and recreational boon to the communities that they served. Since the completion of the dam projections there have been no more serious floods in the Yankton community.

The building of the Missouri River dams also provided jobs. Gene and Jack Lyons worked as construction laborers
on the Gavin’s Point dam which created the beautiful Lewis and Clark Lake a few miles west of Yankton. The work was hard backbreaking labor. When the boys came home from work they were dirty and brown as shoe leather from the summer sun and so tired they could sleep on the edge of a two by four. The jobs paid well. The money provided a helpful contribution to their college education funds. After the dam was built it continued to provide maintenance and service jobs in the community.

When each of the Lyons children turned 13 years old, they opened personal checking accounts funded with enough cash for maintaining a modest balance. Bill and Mary believed the use of checking accounts would teach thrift and money management skills. Each child was expected to pay his or her own personal bills from the account. No specific amount of money was established for replenishing the accounts. It was understood that the money was to be used prudently - and it always was. Some of the town merchants were not accustomed to such young children having checking accounts. If any of them challenged the checks they got a “derisive snort” and, if necessary, a call from Mary. Occasionally one of the children erred in their check book balance arithmetic. Jimmy Lloyd, the bank President would call Bill and say, “Drop in sometime so we can look at the child’s account.”

A Saturday afternoon ritual in the late summer and fall was the Yankton livestock auctions. Bill frequented the auctions to buy partially grown feeder cattle that had just been shipped in from the open range ranches in the west. He bought them to grow to marketable size and to fatten them in his feedlots. He fed them corn, hay and silage (chopped whole corn stalks). The bidders at the auction sat on wooden benches in an amphitheater arrangement surrounding a roped ring where cattle were brought in for viewing and bidding. Hogs and sheep were also sold. Behind the ring on a raised platform sat the auctioneers in their
broad brimmed Stetson hats as they warbled their colorful chants and exhorted the bidders to pay the highest possible prices. The auctioneers typically extolled the livestock for having more quality and value than most of the bidders were able to discern. A successful auctioneer was good at bantering with the bidders and individually acknowledging their presence. Bidding was done discretely. The attendees seldom saw another bidder make a bid. The only evidence of a bid was a minimal body signal such as a wink or the flick of a finger. The auctioneer and his staff watched active bidders like hawks to identify the bids. The clerks, who recorded sales, and sometimes bank representatives, also sat on the platform. A verbal bid was considered to be a binding contract. It was a serious matter for someone to bid and then renege or dispute the purchase.

The livestock auctions were also a place for socializing. Some people came just to “hang out.” A number of truck owners also came to the auctions in hopes of being hired to transport the newly purchased livestock to the farms of the new owners. A few women attended the auctions but it was mostly the domain of men. Livestock auctions were a good place to smoke, chew tobacco, spit and exchange “he-man banter.” On the other hand, the auctions were a place of dignity and seriousness where the selling prices could determine the profitability for the year for the livestock sellers. It also would set the basis for profitability for the next year for the buyers.

The principle livestock auction business in Yankton was owned by a pair of short, sage brothers named Hans and Nils Callisen. They were Danish immigrants and Bill’s good friends. Bill valued their advice – and also the occasional sharing of their whisky that was kept in a well-disguised cache in their office. The whiskey was quietly brought out after the auctions were concluded and as worthwhile business transactions were completed. The Callisen brothers were highly energetic. Often after an auction closed
late in the evening one of them would stretch out to sleep in
the back seat of a car and instruct a hired hand to drive them
450 miles through the night to a western livestock center
where he would conduct more business the next morning
with the ranchers. The Callisen brothers also operated
farms.

In the midsummer when business was slow, the
Callisen brothers sometimes went by boat back to their
childhood homes in Denmark for visits. They always took a
new Nash car with them to provide transportation when they
arrived in Copenhagen.

Bill liked to load the family in the Dodge car on warm
summer evenings after supper for a "trip around the block" to
look at the crops and neighboring farmsteads. While driving
the car, Bill sang a song that opened with the line, "When
evening shadows softly fade away........." He and Mary
enjoyed a special communion between them during these
rides.

Popular songs of the day were Bing Crosby’s White
Christmas (which always made Mary cry); WPA Blues, One
O’clock Jump; Blueberry Hill; and The Gangs All Here.

People were going to movies such as, The Philadelphia
Story - starring Katherine Hepburn; Casablanca - a classic
with Humphrey Bogart; and Gaslight, - a Victorian
melodrama with Charles Boyer and Ingrid Bergman. The
Grapes of Wrath - adapted from a book written by John
Steinbeck captured the desperation of the depression as an
impoverished “Okie” farm family fled their drought-plagued
home in Oklahoma to head for the “promised land” in
California. The futility of the situation is captured by a line
from “Muley” who said he was left behind to “watch over
things in Oklahoma ‘til the folks come back from California”
He then wistfully added, “But I know they ain’t never comin’
back!”

Attending the movies was a weekly ritual for many
people. On the hottest days of summer, movie attendance
skyrocketed because the theaters were the only place in town with air-conditioning. An effective drawing card for attracting movie attendance in mid-week was a drawing for a cash prize. The ceilings and walls of many of the “moving picture emporiums” were encrusted with plaster cupids, doves, cavorting nymphs, ripe roses, soaring Corinthian columns and clouds. The theater’s decorators were apparently inspired by Viennese opera theaters.

Other songs and movies of the day are related to World War II. Some of them are listed in the next chapter on the war.

When the Lyons children started to grow up it became obvious that they were more strongly influenced in their appearance by the Lyons’ genes rather than the Donohoe’s. All of them, with the possible exception of the twins, had similar facial appearances that recalled the looks of the Lyons predecessors. They all had medium builds rather than the tall, more powerful builds of most of the Donohoes. The hereditary Lyons family appearance continued on into the future for at least one more generation. Comparison of a picture of Bill when he was twenty to a picture of John Lyons, Francis’ son, at the same age shows a startling similarity that makes it almost impossible to distinguish one from the other. The personalities of the Lyons siblings were varied. Frank’s late wife, Rita, observed after she became acquainted with the family, “I cannot see any similarity whatsoever, other than physical, among the Lyons siblings. They range from quiet and reserved to extrovert; from artistic to scientific; from taciturn to talkative; and from spiritual to worldly. “

At the end of the period covered by this chapter the “big kids” were coming to the mid-point of their teen-age years. The “little kids” would be teenagers in a few more years.
Leona Kast – Hired girl
1936

The Twins - “See the birdie!”
Circa 1938
First Day of School at Willowdale  – Front row, Tommy, Bobby and Betty. Back row, Gene, Francis and Jacky  
September 1943
Bill with New Rural Fire Association Sign   Circa 1950
Family - First row, Bobby, Betty, Bill, Mary and Tommy
Back row, Jacky, Francis, Pat and Gene
Circa 1945