



"Photo of Dorcy Samuel Letourneau at Old Crow wearing parka, mukluks and mitts during a light snowfall. As a flaxen-haired young man like his grandfather, Dorcy had no inkling at the time that he was an Aboriginal person. How proud he might have been to introduce himself to an Inuit or Dené elder as a member of Canada's Métis Nation."

(WANTED: A screen writer to turn this book into a movie)

## **MODERN HISTORY: The Magic of Books**

Such is the magic of books that miracles sometimes happen.

One lucky day in 1985, a sixty-six-year-old man called Dorcy Samuel Letourneau who lived in Ladysmith on Vancouver Island not far from Lyn Hancock, read a book that was to change his life. That book is the one you are reading, *The Ring*, originally *Tell Me, Grandmother*.

On another momentous day, forty-nine years earlier in the Calgary stock yards, seventeen-year-old Dorcy Samuel was called into his boss's office to see a lady and a 19-year-old girl who said they were his mother Millie and his sister Myrtle. Dorcy was astonished to learn from his visitors that he had been adopted. He spent an hour having dinner with this newfound family, but unfortunately for Dorcy, his adoptive parents forbade Millie and Myrtle from ever seeing Dorcy again.

It was not until Dorcy was preparing to join the RCAF during World War II that his adoptive parents showed him his birth certificate and he learned his real name –Samuel Dorcy Livingston. For a while he wondered if he could be related to the famous Albertan family of Sam and Jane Livingston but he was put off that scent because in all of the stories he

had read about the Livingston family, the name 'Livingstone' was always spelled with an 'e' which was incorrect. So for the sake of a spelling mistake, Dorcy would be 66 years old before he found out who he really was.

As an adult, Dorcy made hundreds of trips north to the Yukon, Northwest Territories and what is now called Nunavut for the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Canada. His job was building infrastructure in remote Aboriginal communities – hospitals, schools, post offices, RCMP barracks and homes for Dené, Inuit and Inuvialuit families.

Dorcy made many friends during his northern trips and was usually invited to stay in the homes of Aboriginal community leaders (there were no hotels). Whenever he spoke of the Inuit it was with admiration and respect for their culture and family values. He was deeply honoured when the respected Dené Elder called Edith Josie (from Old Crow) offered to make him a traditional "Eskimo" parka, mukluks and mitts. He wore his parka (with the fur side in) for many Alberta winters until he retired with his wife, Patricia to Ladysmith, BC.

When the first edition of *Tell Me, Grandmother*, the story of his grandparents Sam and Jane Livingston was published in 1985, the Livingston name was finally spelled correctly.

After reading a review of the book in the Alberta Report, Dorcy Letourneau read the book. On [July 24th 1985](#), his wife Pat wrote to Lyn Hancock, one of the authors, who happened to live nearby. Was her husband related to the famous Livingston family of Alberta?

In the letter she wrote to Lyn, Pat said, “We know that Dorcy Samuel (Samuel Livingston III) had an older sister named Myrtle. We wonder if the Myrtle Hergert mentioned in the preface of your book could be his sister. If you have her address or know where it might be obtained, we would be appreciative of receiving any information.”

Lyn was not a member of this far-flung family whose saga covers a couple of hundred years of the history and geography of North America. However, she was almost as excited as they were when it was confirmed that Dorcy Samuel Letourneau was really Sam Livingston III, the long lost grandson of Sam Livingston I. Pat and Dorcy’s daughter, Susanne Letourneau Morris, who was living in Edmonton, looked up the name Myrtle Hergert in the Calgary phone book and made the first connection. “You don’t know me, but...”



*The Letourneau family and Lyn Hancock look at the book Tell Me, Grandmother that led Dorcy Samuel Livingston to find his long lost sister Myrtle Livingston Hergert. Back, L to R: Dorcy Letourneau, Pat Letourneau (wife), Eli McLaughlin (grandson), Dale Letourneau (daughter). Front, L to R: Vanessa Swanson (granddaughter), Lyn Hancock (1986).*

From then on, phone calls and letters flew back and forth between family members on the Prairie and Vancouver Island, culminating in an emotional Thanksgiving reunion in Edmonton at the home of Dorcy and Pat's daughter Daena Letourneau McGuire when Dorcy met his sister Myrtle face to face. Myrtle said she had been trying to find her adopted brother all her life.

"I grew up as a single child, thinking I was an orphan and now I find all these kinfolk," Dorcy told Lyn in wonderment, dazed by the miraculous discovery that he had a continent-wide family.

Because of *Tell Me, Grandmother*, all the pieces of the puzzle were now in place.



Brother and sister Dorcy Samuel Letourneau (Sam Livingston III) and Myrtle Livingston Hergert, grandchildren of Sam and Jane, reunited after being separated for over 60 years. (Photo: Edmonton Journal, [October 20](#), 1985)

Sam and Jane had fourteen children. Their thirteenth child, Sam Livingston II, named Samuel Henry Livingston after his father, was born in October of 1894. He worked on ranches in the Calgary area and when he was 23 years old, he married Millie Hammel whose family had emigrated from Russia. Sam and Millie had two children, a little girl first and then a boy. Tragically, Sam II died of tuberculosis on [December 7](#), 1919 when he was only 25 (six months after his son was born and just two months after his mother Jane's death).

Sam II's widow Millie, without money or a job, took her two babies to stay with her husband's sister, Mary Livingston Dowler. It must have been a crowded house because Mary already had a large family of her own. This included eleven year-old Dennis Dowler, the little boy asking questions of his grandmother in this book. Dennis was later to marry one of the book's authors, Marion W. Dowler.

In those days there was never enough money to go around and in 1921 when Dorcy (Samuel Livingston III) was just two years old, his mother Millie, unable to support two young children, was forced to give him up for adoption to Amy and Oliver Letourneau of Tofield, Alberta.

Before Millie said goodbye to her son, she ripped the only photograph she had of her two children into two halves and gave each child their own picture. Dorcy and Myrtle would keep those photographs close to their hearts for 66 years until the publication of the book *Tell Me, Grandmother* brought them together in Edmonton at [Thanksgiving](#). The frayed edges of the two pictures matched perfectly. The brother and sister were together again.

Within a couple of months of meeting his sister, Dorcy was summoned to her bedside in the hospital. Myrtle was gravely ill with cancer. "She was elated by my arrival and appeared to make an immediate recovery, enough that she was allowed to go home for weekends. Her doctor thought it was a miracle."

Just a few weeks later on Valentine's Day, 1986, Myrtle passed away, but she died peacefully, happy in the knowledge that what she'd been seeking all her life had been found – her long lost brother, Samuel Dorcy Livingston III, the grandson of Grandfather Sam and Grandmother Jane."