

BROWNLOW WOOD TOOL BOX

by David C Brownlow

INTRODUCTION

I was very fortunate to have been able to spend some of my childhood with my grandfather on my father's side. He was Charles H. Brownlow (1865-1942) and as well as owning a house at 17 Rose Ave. in Toronto he had a cottage (The Mill House) on the Moon River Road in Bala, Muskoka.

The Brownlow family spent summers at the Bala cottage, and in the 1930's this consisted of my grandfather, Auntie Maude (my grandfather's second wife), Aunt Millie (my grandfather's sister), and occasionally a live in maid. Other family members came over the summer period for one to two weeks which included my father, mother and sister Ruth and I along with my father's cousin Nelles from Chicago, USA.

After coming off the railroad dental car at the end of January 1935 we moved into the main floor apartment and dental office at Uncle Fred's house at 1043 Bloor St. West. My mother's Uncle Dr. Fred Conboy and his wife Lillian lived in the upstairs apartment. We lived here until we moved to the upstairs apartment of my grandmother's house at 61 Oakwood Ave. in January 1940.

In the summer of 1938 it was arranged that I would spend the summer at the Mill House cottage before I started kindergarten at the age of 5 at Kent Public School. This was to be the first full summer of many that I enjoyed at the Brownlow Muskoka cottage.

THE WOOD TOOL BOX

On Christmas 1939 I received a very special gift from my grandfather. It was a brown wood tool box complete with a set of tools. The box was 22" long, 9 1/2" wide and 5" deep, with brass hinges and locking clasp. It came with a complete set of working tools, including a small wood saw, a fret saw, a set square, a hammer, a ruler, a screw driver and pliers.

My mother expressed concern that it was far too elaborate but my grandfather said that he would work with me and that it would only be frustrating not to have good tools to work with.

During the summer of 1940 my grandfather and I made a small birdhouse. The birdhouse was hung in a tree beside the cottage where we could see it from our dining room window. It was soon occupied and we could watch as a sparrow family was raised. We also made a 15" high garden figure for one of the flower beds in front of the cottage. My grandfather drew the figure of "Doc", one of Snow White's seven dwarfs, on a pine board and I used the fret saw to cut it out. We worked together to paint it, and I was very proud of the finished figure.

"Doc" spent many summers decorating one of the flower beds. One summer several years later I followed my grandfather's example and made a couple of companion figures for the other flower beds. Only Doc survived the many summers of exposure and until recently stood proudly on the bookcase shelf in our condominium den in Aurora. Doc now resides in Mission B.C. with my daughter Audrey.

I still have some of the tools from the tool box. The box itself was sold at one of our downsizing sales in the summer of 2014 at the Saturday market near our cottage in Orrville. I was pleased that one of the young daughters of our farm neighbour purchased it.



wood tool box



Doc

David Conboy Brownlow
329-111 Civic Square Gate
Aurora, Ontario, L4G 0S6
May 17, 2020

An addition to my book "Muskoka Cottage Retreat" published 2010