

McCormick, Bertha

City woman has seen it all in 100 years

Bertha McCormick celebrates birthday today

By Bill Hunt *Steel p.1*
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Bertha McCormick has lived in two centuries, witnessed four major wars, raised more than a handful of children and observed many changes in her lifetime.

McCormick turns 100 today. Sunday she was feted by some of her many family members in her home at 16 Reid St., where she still resides with minor assistance from a visiting home care worker.

"I was born January 31, 1900. My father's name was Charlie Buskard. My mother died in 1907 when I was seven years old," says McCormick of her early years. Although born on the Second Concession of Thurlow, she spent most of her teenage years working in Belleville before moving to Toronto. It was there, while employed at Simpson's, that she met her

future husband, Joseph A. McCormick. He worked for the railroad. They eventually settled in Belleville.

"I had seven children. My oldest one (Eugene) died last February. He was 75. My second son (John), was lost at sea in 1945. He was on a little Corvette called the Trentonian. It was sunk in the English Channel in 1945," she says. "I am a Silver Cross mother. I think the only one left around here."

Another son died in the first major aircraft crash in Canada, in November, 1963 in Quebec. Her husband died the same year.

Today, McCormick has a son, Charles, who lives in Toronto and visits her each weekend, a second son, Terry, who resides in Houston, Texas, and a daughter, Margaret, who lives in Burlington. She still has a brother living in Quebec. He's 92. Not surprisingly, she has dozens of grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

McCormick is an avid reader and follows the news regularly. "I don't have many

aches and pains and my eyesight and hearing are pretty normal," she says.

Her memory is even better. When asked about the change she's seen in her lifetime, she quickly relates some of her earliest memories. "There's been a great many changes. I saw my first car when I was seven years old, at the Belleville fair. And the telephone too, when I was about seven years old. I remember very well the big earthquake in San Francisco, and the sinking of the Titanic. I was 12 years old when that happened.

"She started out with horses and buggies and ended up in the space age," says son, Charles. "That's basically what happened."

Although still a member of St. Michael's Church, she is no longer able to attend. "I don't get out anymore (but) I listen to Mass on the radio Sunday morning. After all, I'm 100 years old. The priest comes here to visit me quite often."



Intelligencer photo by Bill Hunt

Bertha McCormick, 100, with plaque from city.

In earlier years McCormick did get out more. "I've done quite a bit of travelling in my lifetime. I've crossed the Atlantic five times." Among trips were a journey to Egypt where she rode a camel, and a trip to Israel.

Her late husband, Joe, was a locomotive engineer and McCormick is still a member of the Grand International Auxiliary, an association for locomotive engineers and their spouses. There are only five other members in Belleville, she says.

A homemaker visits her each afternoon and she has borders at her house, so McCormick isn't alone during the week.

For the New Year and end of the century celebrations, Charles and Margaret visited, and McCormick watched the festivities New Year's Day on television. "I didn't sit up for New Year's (Eve), I'm too old for that. I did see the New Year, but I was in bed," she jokes.

There may not be a secret to longevity, but McCormick allows, "I never smoked or drank to any amount."

"I'm very well looked after and I'm very content. I hope to live in this house as long as I live."

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