

THE FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE OF THE OLD GRAND BEACH CAMPSITE

My grandchildren and now my great grandchildren enjoy my recalling a wonderful lady who enjoyed many summers at her little three room cottage called “step-in”, in the old Grand Beach campsite (now a townsite) in Grand Beach Provincial Park.

Everyone in the campsite knew her as “GRANNY NIGHTINGALE”. This was because she too, was a nurse and like her namesake “FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE” who cared for and served the soldiers in the Crimea War, and whose picture appears on this page. Granny also cared for and served the people of Grand Beach with love and devotion.

My parents lived next door to her. When my youngest brother became ill with convulsions, it was nurse “Granny Nightingale” who spent hours with him, immersing him alternatively in tubs of hot and cold water, that saved his life and brought him out of a very serious convulsion.

Granny’s cottage was located on the north-west corner of 1st street and 3rd avenue. It was about the size of a single car garage, and was aptly called “step-in” because the floor of her cottage was only a few inches above ground level. The interior was not lined or insulated, and the exterior sheathing was only buffalo-board. One was always welcome to have tea and toast with her.



Chuck Guarino



What was it like, Papa?

Granny was in her late 70’s or early 80’s during this era. No matter how busy the day was, she always stopped at mid-morning and mid-afternoon to have her “tea”. The cottagers loved her and depended on her in emergencies, for her nursing skills. But she was also a great advocate for the campers in discussing the problems of the day with the General Superintendent of Grand Beach.

Granny always wore a white bonnet, a long gown and mocassin slippers. She walked miles each day with her many friends in the campsite, as well as helping those who needed immediate nursing care.

Granny was indirectly responsible for my becoming a life-guard at Grand Beach, many years later. She allowed me to spend the summer with her, in her little cottage. She would awaken me in the mornings so I could go down to the pier and train for swimming. The lifeguards coached young swimmers. Eventually I continued on and took all the courses that were available with the Royal Life Saving society and the Y.M.C.A. in Winnipeg.

I hope you enjoyed this story about the “Florence Nightingale” of Grand Beach, in the 30’s. See you in our next edition.

Chuck (Papa Chuck) Guarino