

Biography of Frank Alex Coutney



Frank Alex Coutney was born June 18, 1890 Mohamed Abuali Gotmi/(Ghotmy) in the village of LaLa, Lebanon. He was the second son of fruit farmers Mohamed and Zinnie Abuali Gotmi and a younger brother to Ahmed.

In 1907 when Mohamed was seventeen years old and his brother Ahmed twenty-two, their parents had saved enough money to send their sons to a new land for safety and prosperity. The oldest son Ahmed, decided to go to Argentina and young Mohamed choose to come to Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Mohamed's adventures started in Beirut; Alexander, Egypt; a seaport in Italy and then to Marseilles, France where he boarded a ship for New York City. Upon arrival on Ellis Island (New York), Mohamed Abuali Gotmi was given a new name "Frank Alex". He also did not have 50 American Dollars so the U.S. Immigration Department sent him back to Marseilles, France where he worked for a few months.

DETERMINED to get to Canada, Frank Alex once again left France, but this time boarded a ship for Veracruz and on to Mexico City. There, Frank Alex lived and worked with Lebanese friends who helped him get to El Paso, Texas and then north to Brandon, Manitoba, Canada. (It is interesting to note that Frank Alex was young and could only speak Arabic but somehow he found his countrymen in France and Mexico and he has always been grateful to them for helping him get to his destination – Canada)

During 1907 to 1909, Frank Alex worked long hours on farms around Brandon and Winnipeg. He also worked in Regina, Saskatchewan building and installing train tracks for the railway.

FINALLY in 1910, Frank Alex arrived in EDMONTON, Alberta and was greeted by Lebanese friends from LaLa. Since he had previously saved some money, he bought some merchandise (clothes, household items & trinkets) and starting out from Edmonton went about peddling his wares to farmers in the Wetaskiwin, Camrose, Tofield and Vegreville areas.

Approximately 1911, Frank Alex came to the Lac La Biche area. He started working for Alex Hamilton buying Furs in and around the Lac La Biche area. After a few years, Frank Alex decided to go out on his own.....he was a hard worker, young and ambitious and he went about buying furs around Lac La Biche, Northern Alberta and Northern Saskatchewan . He learnt to speak many dialects of the Cree and Chipewyan people of the North and he became their friend.

The next Chapter of Frank Alex's life started on January 21,1924 in Edmonton, Alberta, when he married Rose Beatrix, a young Canadian lady whom he admired for many years. At this time he also decided to take a surname "Coutney".

During the 57 wonderful years of Frank Alex and Rose Beatrix 's marriage, they had twelve children of which seven children survived and had over twenty grandchildren and countless great-grandchildren. Each child was given a Canadian and Lebanese name. Both Frank and Rose were partners in marriage, partners in business and complimented each others characteristics. RESPECT, LOVE , FAMILY, ALLAH/GOD dominated their lives.

Frank Alex Coutney, in his Business World, was a Farmer, Fur Buyer, operated a General Store, was a Contractor building rail ties for the NAR and was a Language Translator for the Alberta Government Law Courts.

Frank Alex Coutney started his businesses in Lac La Biche in 1927 (and before that as a peddler and fur trader/buyer),and at 88 years old (1978) he closed his business doors. Frank Coutney served the community of Lac La Biche and area for over 50 years. He loved this community, this was his home!

Frank Alex Coutney was Proud of his Lebanese Heritage and he was Equally Proud and Grateful of being a Canadian and Albertan. Frank Alex Coutney passed away peacefully at the age of 91 years old (in 1981) after living in Canada 74 years of his life.