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Venie's Letters to Her Dad, 1898 Venie was Catherine Lavenia Isabell Armstrong. She wrote these letters from the family farm at Sydney Forks, to her father who was working away. As an introduction to Venie's letters to her dad, we have Lennie Armstrong's brief history of the Howie-Armstrong Family, written in the 1950s. Lennie (Venie's sister) wrote: Alex Howie, my grandfather, was a farmer at Sydney-River. Mrs. Alex Howie was a Blacksett. Their first house was a log "caban." Catherine Howie, my mother, was the youngest of the above man and woman. My grandmother had "pulled-molasses candy" coloured hair like mine when I was young. Colin, my son, only one of our children to inherit the same. Grandmother was considered a "Mother-in-Israel" type of woman. Caught all the babies around, good at other nursing too. Could weave, smart with her hands and her mind. Strict in her religion, a firm Methodist. Grandfather was a good provider, and was looked up to in the community. He bought a great amount of land. Educated his four boys, but not his four girls. At that time a family paid so much for each child that attended school. (This was before the Free School Act of 1864.) My mother Catherine was the youngest. She was also very religious, but also liked a good time. She was considered not very strong. She married Robert Armstrong, my father. He lived in Gabaroose, and was a shoe maker by trade. She met him while visiting her brother and his wife. The Rev. John Howie, stationed at Gabaroose, a fishing village not far around the shore from Louisbourg. At one time Grandmother nursed all the family when they had smallpox. She would shake the sheets into the big fireplace, and the scabs would crackle. No marks were left on any of them. She had tied their hands so they couldn't scratch. Robert Armstrong was the youngest son of a family of 12 children. His father and mother were also smart folks. Grandfather Armstrong was magistrate for the surrounding district. Grandmother Armstrong caught all the babies in the Gabaroose district. The only case she ever lost (we hear) was her own daughter. That was a serious case.

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