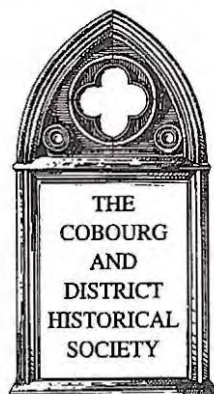


HISTORICAL REVIEW 14



1996



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THE COBOURG AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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**THE COBOURG AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY
PROGRAMME OF SPEAKERS
1996 - 1997**

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Cover Photograph:

Olympic Hurdlers Larry O'Connor [left] and Jim Worrall [right], July 1936.

Cobourg and District Historical Society Archives 97.26.1b

THE ARTISTS OF NORTHUMBERLAND: PAST AND PRESENT

by

Heather Ardies

September 24, 1996

Abstract from "Historically Speaking" (written by Karen Walker):

From Charles Fothergill who drew local scenes in 1817 to Tom Hodgson, an acclaimed abstract painter of today, the artists of Northumberland past and present have sketched, quilted, sculpted, painted, and etched a rich visual history. On September 24th, Art Gallery of Northumberland curator/director, and Historical Society member, Heather Ardies introduced a number of local people who have contributed to this tradition. Significantly, Northumberland's art community was flourishing by the mid-nineteenth century. Along with notables Paul Kane, the Hayward family, and John David Kelly were such lesser-known artists as Reginald Drayton and Harriet Clench. The creative tradition they inaugurated has been carried on by Paavo Airola, Peter Kolisnyk, Ron Bolt, David Blackwood, Kay Graham, and Dorothy Winter, to name but a few. Since 1961, the art of this region has become an integral part of the Art Gallery of Northumberland permanent collection.

SARAH KAST MCGINNIS:
THE STORY OF A TRUE LOYALIST
by
Don Diminie, U.E.L.

The story of of Sarah Kast McGinnis begins with how I came across her. Ten years ago I knew nothing about my mother's family having concentrated on my paternal French lines; I had only a vague recollection of my maternal grandfather. When I asked her, Mother told me about her parents and grandparents. Research showed that my great-grandmother was a Hartman, daughter of Nicholas Hartman, and there I was stuck for a short time. Searching land records for Ernesttown Township, I found that Nicholas had received a hundred acres for a mere 5 shillings from an Adam Staring; this a "natural love and affection" transaction, wherein Nicholas was named as Adam Staring's grandson. Further investigation revealed that Staring (a name to become both Storryng and Sterling in this area) had been an American patriot in the Revolution (America's first civil war), part of the Tryon County militia of New York and had bought his Ernesttown land from Captain Jas. Parrot; also that he had married a Catherine McGinnis. It's **HER** mother, my five times great grandmother I wish to tell you about. A story of hardship, joy, cruelty, love and courage; the story of a true Loyalist, Sarah Kast McGinnis.

In 1688, Louis XIV of France invaded the Palatinate and took Heidelberg; a boy, Johan Georg Kast, was nine. In July of 1689, at Lachine, Quebec the French were massacred by the Iroquois of the Mohawk Valley. The next year, the French and their Indian allies (probably Huron) returned the gesture at Schenectady, New York.¹ The year 1693 saw the French sack Heidelberg for the second time; Johan Georg was now 14 years old. In 1709, postage rates in England were regulated by mileage for the first time, and Japanese Magnolias were introduced; Bach and Handel were busily composing; and to escape tyranny and persecution 14 000 inhabitants of the Palatinate fled to America via Rotterdam and England, courtesy of Good Queen Anne! (100,000 Germans followed in the next hundred years and five million in the 1800s). We're all aware of the hardships such a voyage offered the travellers!

Sarah's parents, Johan Georg Kast and his wife, with four children, all daughters, were part of the Palatine German group of 14,000 which arrived in New York State in 1709. Johan was by now 30 years old. They were to be part of the pitch industry manufacturing pitch for English sailing ships. Johan was a farmer, quite different than this! But they had to escape the atrocities and sufferings inflicted by the French army, as did thousands of others. They were encamped in the Albany area, east and west camps. The pitch industry failed, but life went on, people marrying, children being born and baptised.² Around 1713-14 the Kast family went up the Mohawk Valley to what was called German Flats - what is today Herkimer, New York -

¹ I had relatives killed at both places.

² I think we Loyalist descendants should remember that life seems very hard for our ancestors, but it was the only way they knew!

well ahead of the great 1724 influx of German settlers. Johan, by the way, was naturalized in 1715.

Sarah's exact birth date is not known for certain, but 1713 is the year used since a record in a family Bible says she died 9 September 1791 at Fredericksburgh at the age of 78. Nor is the exact place of birth known, although Schoharie appears in some records. In any event, her father acquired land along the Mohawk River and engaged in farming, and set up a trading post and store, providing for his growing family which was to number 10 children. To stimulate business, he travelled through the forests to meet and trade with the Indians whose castle was not far away. As their trust for him grew, the Indians came to his trading post and got to know and develop an unexplainable attachment to Sarah. So much so, that she would spend time with them in their village; she was a bit special, living part of the time in her father's German-speaking eighteenth century home with its paternalistic traditions and part of the time in the matrilineal longhouse society of the Mohawk people.

By the time she was 21, Sarah knew the forest ways as well as any man; spoke English and German and had a command of several Iroquoian dialects. By any standard, even that of today, she was an accomplished woman.

About this time, she met an industrious Irishman named Timothy McGinnis, nicknamed Teady McGin, who had come over as an indentured servant to the Livingstones, possibly in the 1720s. After he had worked off his indenture (which I think was five years), Timothy took up fur trading as well as land dealings doing business with and/or for Sir Wm. Johnson. His travels naturally brought him into contact with the Kast Trading Post where he met and fell in love with Sarah. They were married in 1734 and the next 20 years, until 1754, were busy and profitable for them. During that period Timothy took over running the post and also acted as Wm. Johnson's commissary at Fort Oswego.

It was, of course, the same fur trade which kept the English and French at each other's throat; who would control the fur trade in North America? The so-called French-Indian War was the result; Timothy went to fight as a captain with Johnson's Indian department. In 1755, he paid the supreme sacrifice along with King Hendrick of the Mohawk and many more at a place still known as Bloody Pond. He died without ever knowing that Johnson had won.

Apparently, Sarah received word of Teady's death in October from an Indian runner; she was now alone to raise her family. Although her father was still alive, he would die in 1757. Her now adult daughters started marrying about this time, indeed one had married in April of 1755, and I like to think that Timothy was there. All her daughters married, as they say, successfully.

By the beginning of the 70s, Sarah and her family were all in very good circumstances; Sarah had given each child a portion of the vast properties she and Teady had accumulated. Her father's had been the first grant in the Herkimer-Schuyler area, 11,000 acres on the north

side of the Mohawk river. (Legend has it that the land was acquired for a keg of rum, but that's not been proven!) Her last daughter to marry was Catherine (my four times great grandmother) who married Adam Staring, while Sarah's son George married Anna of the Staring clan. Now she could visit with grandchildren, attend parties, and just enjoy life. It has been said that she could be seen on warm spring days paddling her canoe along the gently flowing Mohawk River, perhaps down to the Nicholas Herkimer family home where she had danced on occasion. It was now 1774.

That was the year, on June fifth, just five days after the closing of Boston Harbour, that Samuel Adams and company drew up the "Solemn League and Covenant" asking colonists to sign it as a pledge to boycott all commerce to England. If you did not sign, you were labelled a "protestor" and marked for harassment! All around her, Sarah's friends and neighbours - including her sons-in-law Henry Wendell and Adam Staring - were pledging their support to the patriotic cause. Two other sons-in-law, John and Samuel Thomson, refused to sign; Sarah refused to sign, as did her son-in-law, Simon DeForest. Her son refused to sign and enlisted with the British as an Indian interpreter. Later, the Thomsons would come to Ontario, and son George with one leg crippled from this "war" would move first to Ernesttown Township and ultimately, to Amherst Island. Simon DeForest would be killed escaping an Albany jail. Sir William Johnson was dead; and her beloved Timothy was dead; her nephews, most all of them, pledged to the patriots' side; even her old friend and neighbour, Nicholas Herkimer was now a patriot general. Sarah was 61, an old woman by the standards of the day, and ALONE. (She must have loved Timothy dearly, for she never remarried.)

Who could or would advise her? To understand the quandary she faced, let's look at the most crucial factors in her life.

Consider her closeness, her friendship with the Indians; her husband had been a trader with Sir Wm. Johnson; the extended McGinnis family had grown wealthy from their association with Johnson; in the minds of the Valley people, Sarah's name was associated - almost synonymous - with Johnson's; her son-in-law John Thomson was a close friend of Sir John Johnson, a royalist and the son of Sir William. Husband Timothy had died at Fort George fighting for Sir William and the British cause. It had been Queen Anne of England who had provided safety and a new beginning for Sarah's parents. Obviously, it was logical to presume that Sarah would remain loyal to the British Crown. Of course the people of the Mohawk Valley, especially the so-called Committee of Safety, were aware of all these factors. Committee of Safety for whom? Certainly not for anyone who disagreed with them or their cause! And certainly not for Sarah! This committee acted swiftly on Sarah's refusal to sign. She along with sons-in-law Simon DeForest and Samuel Thomson were arrested; the men were jailed in Albany, and Sarah imprisoned at Fort Dayton. Unable to prove anything against her, they let her go, but remained suspicious of her, ultimately arresting her a second time along with her daughter Dorothy, wife of John Thomson, and Dorothy's sixteen-year-old daughter Margaret. The women were thrown into a fetid, dark cell.

The cruel treatment that they received was too much for young Margaret; she died in the dark cell, only 16 years old. Despite repeated questioning, Sarah and Dorothy said nothing. In the meantime, Brigadier Barry St. Leger had laid siege of Fort Stanwix in early August of 1777. The Brits were getting very close. Also, the Committee wanted, indeed needed, Indian allies, and they knew that Sarah could be of great help to their needs, but she never wavered; her loyalty was to her King! The committee even offered her a guard of 15 men and a daily salary if she would convince the Indians to desert the British. But still she never wavered in her resolve. With St. Leger so close, the committee realized the exposed position of the valley people, and not wanting to be caught with such a well-connected Tory in their hands, they let Sarah and Dorothy go. Taking the lifeless body of Margaret with them, the two women returned to a ransacked, empty home. (All their possessions had been auctioned off.) However, St. Leger did not advance into the valley, but rather remained stubbornly dug in at Fort Stanwix. Realizing this, and that Sarah was still a threat, the committee set out to arrest Sarah once again, only eight days after letting her go. However, this time the two women had been warned by an unknown ally. Frantically, Sarah and Dorothy gathered together some food, clothing, perhaps a knife and blanket and a few gold coins that had been hidden away. While preparing the smaller children for flight, Dorothy questioned her mother about William's plight. For William, Sarah's first son, was a grown man with the mind of a newborn babe who was usually kept chained to prevent self-inflicted injury. The need to leave William behind in order to save the others must have been a difficult decision for Sarah, especially when their home was burned to the round with William in it. Hours later, Sarah and her family staggered into St. Leger's camp. On August 22, 1777, St. Leger and his supporters finally gave up the siege on Fort Stanwix and retreated to Oswego with Sarah and family with them.

The McGinnis family was now in tattered remnants: Sarah, three of her daughters, George's pregnant wife, and at least eight grandchildren were homeless and nearly destitute. From Oswego they were sent to refugee camps near Montreal. At that time, an old friend, Colonel Daniel Claus, Superintendent of Indians, was stationed at Montreal. He, too, was aware of the high regard the Indians held for Sarah, and he was also painfully aware of how much the British needed the Indians as allied men at arms. After Oriskany the Indians had said, "Never again!" Claus talked Sarah into returning -- ALL ALONE -- to live with the Indians and keep them firmly on the side of the British. She was then 64 years old, and had lost everything. She likely only wanted peace and rest, but Claus was asking her to do what no British officer could do. Reluctantly, she agreed and, bidding her family farewell, set out for the winter woods of northern New York State in late 1777. Travelling first to Niagara on a British ship, then by foot and canoe to a Cayuga village, near what is today Geneseo, New York where she was warmly welcomed by the people. During her stay there, Sarah was brought a wampum belt received by the Indians from General Schuyler in his attempt to swing them over to the American side. Instead of letting it pass through the entire Six Nations' territory, Sarah told them it was an evil message, and on her advice, they buried the offending parcel in a hidden spot. Throughout that winter and into the early spring of 1778, Sarah kept the Six Nations focused and loyal to King George III, ensuring their continued loyalty and support. She was so successful, in fact, that Claus persuaded her to once again return to the

Indians in September of 1779. Again, she made the trip to spend another winter in the woods for a king she would never meet! On this second trip, she was accompanied by her son George, then a Lieutenant with Butler's Rangers, and later crippled for life at the Battle of Stone Arabia (1780).

The Paradox:

It seems odd, but Sarah appears to be the **only woman** who worked to maintain the loyalty of the devastated Indians. Molly Brant, sister of Joseph Brant and widow of Sir William Johnson (married in a Mohawk ceremony), is often credited with keeping the Indians loyal that year. However, Molly lived far from the Indian villages in the comfort and safety of a private home on Carleton Island. It's written that there Molly's older daughters were sought after by young officers in a social whirl of enjoyment.

Despite her loyal efforts, Sarah's two winters of personal sacrifice, hardship and service were strangely, inexplicably, never acknowledged by the British Government. She was offered no payment. No certificate of gratitude was ever offered; nor a letter of thanks ever received; at war's end she received no pension. She subsisted in a drafty shack inside the fort at Carleton Island, sharing her meagre government rations with starving Indians who would come looking for help. And she did sewing for other women and soldiers, all the while slowly starving to death. In 1784, with the help of her son George, she was brought to Cataraqui where she survived for a while. But inevitably, the trials she had undergone took their toll. Death came at last on 9 September 1791 in the home of her grandson, Lieutenant Timothy Thomson, son of her daughter Elizabeth and Samuel Thomson of Fredericksburgh. Like so many Canadian settlers, she was buried in an unmarked grave and lay forgotten, ignored by history and unknown to a majority of her Canadian descendants.

That all changed on a Sunday - 8 September 1991 - when over 200 of her descendants gathered at the cemetery of St. John's Church in Bath, Ontario to unveil a granite memorial and bronze placque in honour of this quite remarkable woman. Sadly, this was an event I missed as I hadn't yet found Sarah. This memorial was done with the support of the Quinte Branch of the United Empire Loyalist Association of Canada.

In her book, *While the Women Only Wept*, Janice Potter-MacKinnon relates several of Sarah's experiences. The author goes to great lengths, several times, to point out that women of that period did what their husbands did, following the policy or attitude of the husband. In the case of Sarah McGinnis, the essential truth is that **she had a choice** as she was a widow. She could have signed the Americans so-called Covenant. She did not! Again, she had a choice when asked to go, twice, to live with the Mohawk. She could have refused. She did not! She sacrificed all she had; all her acres of land; her home; her relationship with her siblings, her nieces and nephews; and her personal belongings, to stay loyal to her King and to England, the country which had given her parents a safe haven. That is why I think she should be recognized as a Loyalist, and that her direct descendants should be able to achieve their U.E.L. designation upon proving descent from her.

In conclusion, I rather like the words of noted Ontario historian, the late Dr. H.C. Burleigh, used when he wrote about Sarah:

I often wonder if the Continental Congress ever discovered that its aim to draw the Iroquois from their allegiance to the British Crown was foiled by a tired but indomitable woman of sixty-four years, or that their belts of wampum still lie buried somewhere in the forests of northern New York.

Rest, Gran'ma Sarah! Rest in Peace!

A PASSIONATE PEN: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF FAITH FENTON

by
Jill Downie

The time: January 1894. The place: Toronto. It is evening. There has been a heavy snowfall - heavy enough to stop the streetcars running, so that the only sound that breaks the silence is the distant jingle of sleighbells. Struggling through the snow along College Street is a small woman, poorly dressed in a threadbare ulster, with an old cloth cap pulled down low over her forehead. As she fights her way through the drifts, the snow seeps in through the holes in her worn leather boots.

She is a common enough sight in nineteenth century Toronto, and the place to which she is heading is one of the few refuges for women of her sort in the city: the House of Industry, where she can get a bed for the night and something to eat in return for a few hours work.

When she reaches her destination, she will be roughly chastised for arriving so late, forced to take a strip bath and put on the coarse cotton night-gown provided, then left in a huge overheated dormitory filled with women from the streets, fetid air and the occasional smell of whiskey. When she gets out of her truckle bed to open the door in an attempt to let in some fresher air, her neighbour warns her, "What are you doin'!? D'you want to let the rats in? It's real bold they are." Placing the blanket she's been given over the parade of plump, sluggish bed-bugs marching down her pillow, Mary Smith of Hamilton lies down to wait out the night.

Only - this woman is not Mary Smith of Hamilton. This woman who takes her place in the House of Industry amid women with names like Fighting Kate the Irish Terror, women who talk casually about the last time they were in jail and who compare notes about the quality of the cups of tea provided by the House of Industry, the Salvation Army and various police stations is called Faith Fenton, and she is one of a handful of women journalists. She has a column, "Women's Empire," in a major Toronto newspaper called *The Empire*, which was created with the financial support of the Conservative Party under John A. Macdonald. Her father's Tory connections probably helped her get the job, and she will build on those connections all her professional life. Her visit undercover to the House of Industry causes a sensation in Toronto. And the woman called Faith Fenton, who masqueraded as Mary Smith of Hamilton, is also a woman called Alice Freeman.

A Passionate Pen is the story of a woman who has all but disappeared from the history of her country. It is the story of a woman who invented herself, because there was no pattern to copy, no route maps for the journey she chose to make. Other women pioneers of her era faced the same challenge, but she became two women to protect the identity of the one who followed the path laid out by society, and in doing so she became the woman she created.

Why did Alice Freeman need to create another persona? Why did she disappear? Let's take a look first at her creation: Faith Fenton.

Faith Fenton was famous at a time when it was difficult for a woman to be famous unless she was an aristocrat or an actress, or had done something spectacularly scandalous. In fact, there was something rather scandalous about a woman being famous at all. But famous she was, equally at home with the rich, the titled and the celebrated. She used her column to advance careers and causes - and so did the rich, the titled and celebrated of the nineteenth century Canada. Politicians on both sides of the House courted her attention, the actresses and singers who were the stars of their day wrote her letters, gave her handwritten notes to get her through the stage-door to their dressing-rooms. Prime Ministers gave her signed photographs. Alexander Muir, composer of "The Maple Leaf for Ever," gave her autographed copies of his new compositions. Catherine Parr Traill sent her first editions of her books, with personal letters tucked inside and this amusing little piece of doggerel:

Catherine Parr Traill is my name
England was my nation
Lakefield is my dwelling place
And Faith Fenton my admiration.

Faith Fenton was the Pamela Wallin, the Hanna Gartner, the Barbara Walters, of her day. And perhaps more than that. She carried on a secret correspondence with the wife of the Governor-General of Canada, Lady Aberdeen, in which the two of them set about arranging to publicize and promote the fortunes and influence of the newly formed National Council of Women. Lady Aberdeen, of course - as wife of the Governor-General - was not supposed to have anything to do with anything that smacked of partisan politics or interest groups, so she hid behind journalists like Faith Fenton, who was only too happy to front for her.

I say it was a secret correspondence. It was so secret that it only survived in the family archives preserved by Faith Fenton's great-niece, Phyllis MacKay. Lady Aberdeen barely gives a mention to Faith in her diaries, and there is absolutely no mention of a link between them. The family archives contain letters from John A. Macdonald, Wilfred Laurier, writers, actors, actresses, composers, invitations to costume balls in the Parliament Buildings - even an invitation to a double hanging in the Yukon. For Faith Fenton also went to cover the gold rush in the Yukon - walking 150 miles along one of the toughest trails, the Teslin Trail, to get there, at the age of forty-one. But even the family archives contain very little about the woman who invented Faith Fenton. Alice Freeman.

Alice Freeman was born on January 14, 1857, in Bowmanville, to William Henry and Mary Ann Freeman of London, England, who had emigrated first to New York State and then to Bowmanville. She was the third of what would be a family of twelve children, and the Freemans' first-born Canadian. We know when she was born, because of the baptismal records kept by St. John's, the Anglican Church in Bowmanville. Her mother took three of the children in one batch to be christened, and it is fortunate that the record survived, because Faith Fenton never admitted to her real age to the day of her death. Her tombstone in Mount Pleasant Cemetery says 1858. Mind you, at one stage in her life Faith knocked off as much as

five years.

Present-day Bowmanville is a pleasant country-town still with many of the pretty nineteenth-century homes that Alice Freeman would have known. They have an excellent museum in one of those old homes - the Bowmanville Museum - that gives a wonderful picture of what life would have been like for prosperous nineteenth-century Ontarians. And Bowmanville in the nineteenth century was indeed prosperous. Asa Danforth's great highway, which ran from Kingston in the east to Burlington in the west, joined Bowmanville at the beginning of the nineteenth century to other similar settlements along the shoreline. By 1856, the time the Freemans arrived, the Grand Trunk Railway ran through from Toronto to Montreal, and Bowmanville was a hive of industry. There was a major cabinet factory on Elgin street, and it boasted the second-largest piano factory in the country. Steamers and barges took coal and apples across the lake to New York State. There was a thriving brickyard and an equally thriving distillery. It had its very own bank.

It was a great place for William Henry Freeman, because he was a furniture-maker by trade. It was also a great place for him because he was a singer and musician by avocation. Music was everywhere in those days - glee clubs, church choirs, choral groups, bands. His father, Alice's grandfather, was a lyricist and a composer who had run away from the family expectations - he was supposed to have become a doctor or a lawyer - and married an opera singer.

It was a great place for Alice Freeman, because there was a good school - certainly by the nineteenth century, small-town standards - the Bowmanville Union School. In fact, the early immigrants to that area were people who valued education highly - the town abounded in small, private schools from the very beginning. Bowmanville even had a book-store in the 1850s. Education at this time was not compulsory, and there seems from a chance record that has survived from 1865, to have been a problem for the Freeman children when it came to attending school. The oldest daughter, Mary, was late twenty-three times in one term, and we do not how many times she was absent - she was probably helping her mother with yet another baby. (I remarked once during the research for this book on the fact that some years and some documents survive and wondered why - and was told someone probably didn't clear out the basement so thoroughly that year. It made me feel better about my own.)

So little Alice had a good school to go to, and that is exactly what she was able to do. Because in 1866 or 1867 the Freeman family moved from Bowmanville to Barrie, and left their third child, Alice, behind, to stay with the minister of the Congregationalist Church, Thomas Reikie, and his wife Margaret, who was childless. It is clear from Faith Fenton's writings that she never got over what seemed to her an abandonment. No explanation was ever given to her, according to family records, and in the Victorian era that was par for the course: parents owed no explanation of their actions to their children. Actually, it was the best thing that could have happened to her.

Records for schools outside Toronto for this period are spotty, so thank heaven for local newspapers - particularly when the journalist, Faith Fenton, never ever directly admits to being Alice Freeman. Thank heaven also for the archivists who have painstakingly transferred those fragile pieces of newsprint to microfiche and microfilm. Family records told me where Alice had lived during those Bowmanville years - the unusual octagonal parsonage of the Congregationalist church still stands and is now divided into two apartments - but did not tell me much else. I had to pick up the clues from Faith Fenton's hundreds of columns and then go and search elsewhere. It is on these occasions that one is thankful for bureaucracy and red tape, for the lives of our ancestors are preserved in such mundane things as street directories and censuses, and the minutes of school board meetings. And newspapers. It was the local Bowmanville newspaper, *The Canadian Statesman*, which gave me a picture of what Alice Freeman's school would have been like.

Union School was overcrowded, with more than seven hundred pupils in attendance, and some of the younger children were moved to the Sons of Temperance Hall for their lessons. Classes of sixty or sixty-five were not unusual at that time, and in 1868 poor Miss Pollock's Division had 85 children in what would have been accommodation for 65. Boys and girls were, of course, segregated, and were brought together "in the first class only and for the purpose of recitation." Authorized books were used exclusively: the *Canadian Reader*, the *Royal Reader*, the *Ontario Reader*. There was little or no teacher training, so sticking to the text was probably not such a bad idea and there were few support materials. The Union School boasted one or two maps and globes of the world, a magic lantern, and a library that was open to the public.

In that structured, overcrowded environment Alice Freeman thrived - after all, being there day after day represented freedom to her. Year after year Miss A. Freeman appears on the prize lists which were printed in full in the local newspaper, winning awards for French, Classics, English Literature, Etymology, Botany, Grammar, Geography, History, Arithmetic and Algebra - not a bad curriculum, by any standards.

We also know from the same local newspaper that there was a highly popular and dedicated woman teacher, Miss Jane Kyle, who taught the top Division in the Union School for fifteen years, and then accepted a position in Port Hope where they offered her better conditions and more money. Fortunately for Alice Freeman, Jane Kyle did not leave until just after she graduated.

In an unusually radical outburst against the School Board, the local paper said: "We cannot blame her in the least for giving some attention to her own interests... We can only hope that the School Board of this town will not find that in allowing Miss Kyle to depart they have been 'penny wise and pound foolish.'"

The girls gave Miss Kyle a pair of gold bracelets as a farewell gift, "as a memento of our love," and she urged them to cultivate three things: a firm will to do right, a tender conscience

and a loving heart." They were principles Alice Freeman and her alter ego, Faith Fenton, would hold dear all their lives.

On January 4, 1872, Alice Freeman performed at the closing exercises of the Union School, received her last prizes. By the end of the year she was in Toronto to begin her training as a teacher at the Toronto Normal and Model Schools.

The Toronto Normal and Model Schools were on the site now occupied by the Ryerson Institute of Technology in an impressive building that looked more like an English stately home than an institution. Alice's arrival there in 1872 came just after the act in 1871 - the last major piece of legislation by Egerton Ryerson before he retired - which brought the old grammar schools under the full authority of the provincial department of education and legislated attendance in school between the ages of seven and eleven. More children in school - more teachers needed. So Alice and many other young women were given a chance at the teaching profession. They lived in approved boarding houses around Toronto, with a curfew at night, compulsory attendance at church on Sunday - and the fate of any student caught talking to a member of the opposite sex was immediate expulsion.

Classes began at nine o'clock and encompassed History, Geography, Chemistry, Arithmetic, Mensuration, Algebra, Geometry, Drawing, Euclid, Natural Philosophy, Book-Keeping - the list goes on. No such thing as specialization in those days. And the male students had military drill on Saturday mornings - in Alice's time it was under the direction of a veteran of the War of 1812. The young men soon discovered that the way to ensure an easy morning was to get the old drill-sergeant going on his war-stories.

Alice's training school records have not survived, but those of some of her class-mates have. The head teacher for the girls was Mrs. Martha Cullen, who marked so harshly that the Principal, James Hughes, sometimes took it upon himself to upgrade her results. There was poor Miss Cameron, who was described thus: "Slow and lifeless, kept her eyes constantly on the book. In Arithmetic did all the work herself and that very slowly. A wretched teacher." Then there was Miss Hall, who said to her class, "You wasn't reading that well. Read again." Then there was the poor little country-girl, Miss Davidson, who pronounced "barrel" as "barl," to the amusement of the class and was judged by the unforgiving Mrs. Cullen as "a miserable teacher."

It sounds grim, but in fact I think Alice had a pretty good time. From the columns of her alter ego, Faith Fenton, I would guess this was when she first explored Toronto, the city she grew to love. She and girl-friends walked miles along the deserted winter lakeshore amid the empty boathouses below High Park, saved their pennies in summer for the ferry to the Toronto Islands, where they would walk between cottages called "Sea-Bird," and "Rosebud," and "Far Niente," and take rides on the old carousel. They would stand to watch the entertainers like the juggler, "Dr. Marigold," in his glossy high beaver hat and spotless white cuffs, and his gift of the gab.

Silence in the streets on Sundays - no street-cars, no organ-grinders playing the Money-Musk and *Il Trovatore*. The students would have attended the church of their choice, and even small children could be hauled into court for playing in the street on Sundays.

Alice did brilliantly. She worked as a student teacher on the Niagara Peninsula in a school largely used by the Mennonites of the area, and then returned to Toronto and her first teaching position. In the minutes of the Toronto Board of Education there is the following entry: "That Miss Alice Freeman, holding a Second-Class Certificate, Grade B, be appointed Palace Street School, in the place of Miss Sefton, resigned." She entered the service of the Toronto School Board in October 1875 at the age of eighteen, at a salary of just under \$300 a year - under half what the men from her Normal School course would receive.

Palace Street School was tough - it still survives, derelict and empty on the corner of Cherry Street - and Niagara Street School, to which Alice transferred in 1877, was just as tough. In an age that believed in corporal punishment, statistics show that its use of the cane was higher than usual. Alice moved to John Street School in 1881 and to Ryerson School in 1883, where she would stay for the rest of her teaching career.

A straightforward story so far, the story of Alice Freeman. Nineteen years in the service of the Toronto School Board, remembered as the teacher with the low, musical voice, and the gentle glance - the teacher who began every day in the classroom of this young nation by writing at the top of the blackboard, "Canada, our home." Nineteen years. But so complete was the separation between Faith Fenton and Alice Freeman that it came as a surprise to her present-day descendants when I told them she had been a teacher for so long. The myth Faith Fenton perpetuated that she taught for a few years and then became a journalist lived on until now.

Why? To answer that let's take a look at the attitudes of the school board. Many trustees were very unhappy about women being in the schools at all. They discouraged the hiring of women over thirty, because by that time they had no business not being wives and mothers. The dress code was so strict that a teacher who rather foolhardily wore bloomers shocked one trustee so profoundly he did not know whether to call her a lady or a prostitute. At one meeting of the school board, the chairman tabled a motion that women with corns on their feet, tight shoes or coloured stockings not be hired.

Alice Freeman's ambition was to be a journalist. When she finally landed a job on *The Empire*, she was probably paid around \$2.00 a week, so that there was no question of her giving up her day job. The offices of *The Empire* were on Grand Opera Lane, right alongside the Grand Theatre, which was the theatre in nineteenth century Toronto. All the stars played there: Emma Albani, Lillie Langtry, Sarah Bernhardt, Henry Irving. Can you imagine the reaction of the chairman of the school board if he had known that the teacher of the Junior Book Classes at Ryerson dropped in to talk to the soubrettes and stars at the Grand on her way to work - women who undoubtedly wore tight shoes and coloured stockings and had corns on

their feet? That she spent her evenings in an office with men to whom she was not related, asked men to escort her on the occasions when only the presence of a man would get her through the door? One of her frequent escorts, for instance, was the crime reporter of *The Empire*, and with him Faith went into police stations and holding cells, and places like the Fred Victor Mission on Jarvis, which gave shelter to the vagrants and street-people of Toronto - and still does to this day.

Like the actors and actresses of the Grand, night-time would have been Faith Fenton's time to perform. She would have written and delivered her articles at night, or at the weekend - she talks only about standing on College Street at the first light of dawn, with only a passing paper-boy and a robin singing in a tree for company.

And how she used her summer vacations! To the reader's of *Woman's Empire* she brought back reports from the Gaspé, Montréal and Québec City, Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island. No other writer in Canada at the time, male or female, gave readers such an extensive picture of their fellow Canadians. And from all over Canada, and even from abroad, they wrote to her, with their wonderful and sometimes touching pen-names: Wildflower, Narcissus, Prairie Lily, Bent Face, Moths and Dust. Some of her comments would fit our twentieth century Canada quite as well as Faith's nineteenth century reality:

The Provinces of our Dominion are not in a very desirable state of harmony just at present...The real difficulty is the one that lies at the heart of all inter-state disturbance - the old, old conflict of race and creed. Will the time ever come, I wonder, when we shall have neither French-Canadians, nor English-Canadians, but Canadians pure and simple.

Those sentiments were expressed over a hundred years ago.

Faith Fenton broke the rules in a way that Alice Freeman never could have done. In an age without Social Insurance Cards and Income Tax Forms it was certainly easier to live a double life, but by the time she left teaching it must have been known in Toronto that Alice was Faith. By this time, however, her connections with the rich and the powerful possibly protected her. Faith criticized wrongs in her society in a way that Alice could never have contemplated. She even criticized the school board. Here is Faith Fenton, writing about an attempt by the trustees to ban all married women teachers from the school system:

So the cause of married women has prevailed; and the common sense majority of the School board has prevented the minority from making a laughing stock of the whole. Had the medieval resolution before the board on Friday evening been carried, the next step would have been to compel all women over forty to resign, as already I believe no woman beyond that age is engaged by the Board...Oh, they are deep, sirs, deep - Messrs. Fitzgerald,

Douglas and confreres. Being young and handsome themselves, they want to reign over a garden of girl bachelors.

Faith says she believes no woman over forty was employed by the school board - actually, she knew that very well. She herself was able to find her freedom from her double life at the age of 37, with the help and support of Lady Aberdeen, founding *The Canadian Home Journal*, which eventually became *Chatelaine*. By 1898, she had reinvented herself again and was on the Teslin Trail as the *Globe's* official correspondent covering the Gold Rush. After a journey of great hardship and deprivation, she reached boom-town Dawson City and found the love of her life - but that is another story.

Another story, too, is the reason she disappeared from the history of her country, the reason her family held the secret of this extraordinary woman close to them, until her great-niece, Phyllis MacKay, decided that enough time had passed and the saga of this unique Canadian should be told.

I will finish with Faith's own words to her readers: "Here at my desk, in my quiet room, with the rumble of the electric cars deepening and dying, with the still starry winter night outside and the household hushed to sleep, I put down my pen for a moment and try to gather about me all your faces, to hear your voices and feel the warm hand clasp that I know you would give me if you could - if through *Woman's Empire* Canadian women have gained even in slight degree a further knowledge of their own beautiful country, I am content."

* * *

The following are extracts from Faith Fenton's columns which appeared in the *Woman's Empire*:

In March, 1889, Faith took a young friend for her first visit to the Ontario legislature, to see her local member of parliament in action:

(We) were ushered into the confined cage that is termed by grace of speech 'the Ladies' Gallery.' Here we had leisure to study our representatives - I mean the representatives of our husbands and brothers - and to listen to the floods of eloquence, which, we were convinced, they unceasingly poured forth.

"I never supposed a Parliament looked like this," remarked my companion, after a brief inspection. "I imagined that the members always wore full dress suits and sat around a long table in various picturesque poses holding rolls of paper in their hands."

The members are ranged, sheep and goat fashion, on the right and left of the Speaker, a portly old gentleman who seems somewhat affected by the somnolent atmosphere of the Chamber. His duties seem to be chiefly to mutter an occasional indistinct sentence and to help the House adjourn. Presently, my companion spoke.

"There's our Doversville member over in that corner. I've just discovered him. Why, I believe he's asleep," she added with a gasp of surprise.

"I'm afraid he is," I answered, as my eye followed her glance. "There seem to be quite a number asleep. But then the House sat until 8.15 last night, and I suppose they are tired out with the unusual exertion."

Just then the Doversville member roused up, snapped his fingers, sent one page for a glass of water, another for a blue book, looking intensely awake for a couple of minutes, then subsided for the remainder of the evening behind a newspaper, either to finish his nap or pencil a report for his constituents.

"He never says anything about sleeping or newspaper reading when he comes home," asserted his young townswoman. "I suppose it wouldn't be parliamentary."

There is one thing our Ontario legislature can do well, and that is - adjourn. The placidly-reposing Speaker jumps up, mutters a few indistinct words, pops on a queer shaped hat; the sergeant-at-arms rushes forward, seizes the mace, precedes the Speaker, and the two vanish out of the chamber in the twinkling of an eye.

Our ideal Parliament has been badly shattered and we can never put it together again. Yet out of the ruins we see arise a newer and more perfect assemblage, based upon the enfranchisement of women.

"When women enter Parliament, the men will take their hats off, and sit up straight, and keep their eyes open and look as if they knew something," said my friend, "and then, think how nice it will be to receive \$600 for thirty days work - just to look wise and adjourn."

*

There were, naturally, difficulties for a nineteenth-century woman in an all-male environment:

***Woman's Empire* November 4, 1893.**

It is amusing to note men's devices to keep us women within the bounds that they approve. They know our weaknesses and trade upon them.

"You are not a suffragist; you are too womanly for that," said one to me recently in commendatory tone.

The speaker was well aware that I valued his good opinion; and after that how could I confess that way down in my heart I do believe in woman suffrage, and so stand confessed in his eyes - unwomanly.

Oh, they know very well - these men - that a woman would be considered anything rather than unwomanly; therefore they keep the word as a bogie to lull us into silence.

Secretly we fail to see how having the right to vote on the country's - our country's - affairs is going to deteriorate either us or the country. But after such an imputation from one in whose opinion we are anxious to stand well, we could never acknowledge our conviction - no, no, no.

And thus father, brother, lover, friend, by their deft weapons of flattery, keep down the troublesome little thoughts that arise in women's hearts until they die of inanition.

*

However, Faith's preferred weapons in the battle of the sexes were humour and satire:

I was somewhat amused and a good deal disdainful concerning the plaint of a Canadian young man in the August number of *The Canadian Monthly*. Mr. J.L. Hayne cries woe, woe, woe, through several pages of print, because he believes that, in view of the greater skill of girl clerks, male clerks are doomed to extinction. If the writer of the article be a member of the fraternity whose lamentations he sounds forth, extinction cannot come too soon for the good of the race.

Girls make better clerks than young men, he acknowledges - they are neater, better behaved and quicker; therefore they are entering into clerical work in increasing numbers, to the exclusion of young men; therefore, the latter cannot get clerical positions, and those who do earn only small salaries - therefore the girls must be admonished.

Wise reasoning and generous conclusion, is it not? I wonder what about "the survival of the fittest" in this instance.

This same profound thinker desires that 200 girls should withdraw from clerical positions they occupy in Ottawa in order to "create an opening" for the same number of young men, "for there are at least that number of girls in the capital who have no other excuse for working than comes from considerations of cupidity, selfishness and pride."

The writer closes by solemnly warning young women that in thus showing superior clerical ability they are given places "which properly belong to young men," and "thus intensify the conditions which are filling this country with spinsters and bachelors."

Oh, you clever Canadian girls, what terrible wrong are you doing these young men in Ottawa!

It is true that there is plenty of work - men's work - in this big broad Dominion, that for the lack of strength women can never do; but then it wants a real man to do it. There are wildernesses to open up, forests to hew down, seas to sail, ships to make, mines to delve, cities to build. This country of ours wants men and men's strength more than any other thing in its present stage of development. There's room and work for a man all the world over, but he's got to be a man and not a soft-handed, delicate creature, who sighs for clerical work and the Civil Service, and who urges the deposition of those whom he acknowledges to be superior in the work in the order that 200 of his kind may step daintily in.

And failing to do this, O you bright Canadian girls, your punishment will be a terrible one - these dainty Jeremiahs cannot marry you.

* * *

THE SHAKERS IN AMERICA

by

Peter Greathead

The Shakers, whose official name is The United Society in the First and Second Appearing of Christ, was America's largest and most successful communal society. For over two hundred years, its members have lived quietly in secluded communities, sharing a simple life and seeking perfection in everything they do.

The history of the Shakers began in England during the mid-1700s, a time of sweeping change and general unrest. A small group of religious dissenters came into being under the guidance of two former Quakers, James and Jane Wardley at Bolton-on-Moors near Manchester. The followers of the Wardleys were derisively called "Shaking Quakers" or "Shakers" because of their frenzied physical manifestations of religious zeal.

Among their adherents was a young woman named Ann Lee, who joined in 1758 at the age of 22. Ann, the second of eight children, had no formal education, and worked from an early age in a textile mill in Manchester. Ann married a blacksmith named Abraham Standerin and bore four children, all of whom died in infancy. Deeply troubled and in broken health, she struggled to purify herself, ultimately experiencing a complete conversion. "My soul broke forth to God," she said.

With new zeal and restored health, she was soon taking a more active part in the Wardley group of Shakers, speaking out especially against "cohabitation of the sexes." Ann was subject to what she perceived as religious visions, and her sharp memory of these occurrences combined with powerful oratorical skills soon elevated her to a position of leadership in the fledgling organization.

Their unconventional religious practices and indeed their open attack on the established Anglican Church soon brought the group into conflict in the community. The leaders of the sect, including Ann Lee, were arrested and jailed on several occasions.

At Manchester, in England
This blessed fire began,
And like a flame in stubble,
From house to house it ran:
A few at first receiv'd it,
And did their lust forsake;
And soon their inward power
Brought on a mighty shake.

The rulers cried, "Delusion!
Who can these Shakers be?
Are these the wild fanatics,
Bewitched by Ann Lee?
We'll stop this noise and shaking.
It never shall prevail;
We'll seize the grand deceiver,
And thrust her into jail."

Ann's public persecution increased her esteem within the Wardley society and she emerged as the most devout and gifted disciple; the other members acknowledged her leadership by giving her the title of "Mother."

Directed by a vision and provided with the funds by John Hocknell, the only well-to-do member of the society, Mother Ann and eight members, including her husband and brother, set out for America in 1774. After a stormy three-months passage on the ship *Mariah*, the little band arrived in New York on August 6. Some of the party went up the Hudson River to Albany to look for land, while others separated to find employment. Ann took work doing laundry. Her brother William found work as a blacksmith. Hocknell returned to England to bring out his family and other Shakers. About the same time, Ann's husband renounced his faith and abandoned his wife.

In 1776, Ann joined the little community at Niskeyuna (later called Watervliet) in the wilderness near Albany. Their hardscrabble existence and initial failure to attract new members must have been deeply discouraging to the pioneer Shakers.

By now the American Revolution was underway, and the Shakers' belief in pacifism, and their recent arrival from England, brought them under suspicion. In 1780, Mother Ann and other leaders were imprisoned for treason. Mother Ann was held for six months before her followers were able to convince Governor George Clinton of her innocence and she was freed. The experience only enhanced Mother Ann's fame and created more interest in the Shakers.

As more and more inquirers flocked to the Niskeyuna colony, the Shaker leadership decided to undertake a mission in New England. In May 1781, Mother Ann and a small party of followers set out on a mission that would last two years. The missionaries met constant harassment and often violent persecution, but succeeded in attracting many converts and laying the foundations for a number of Shaker communities.

A year after her return to Niskeyuna, Mother Ann died at age 48. The beatings, hard travel, strenuous preaching, and years of privation had extracted their price.

There are no pictures of Mother Ann, but two Elders writing a history of the Shakers provide this description:

Mother Ann Lee, in her personal appearance, was a woman rather below the common stature of woman; thick set, but straight and otherwise well proportioned and regular in form and features. Her complexion was light and fair, and her eyes were blue, but keen and penetrating...Her manners were plain, simple and easy; yet she possessed a certain dignity of appearance that inspired confidence and commanded respect. By many of the world, who saw her without prejudice, she was called beautiful; and to her faithful children, she appeared to possess a degree of dignified beauty and heavenly love, which they had never before discovered among mortals.

The leadership of the Shakers passed to James Whitaker, Joseph Meacham, Lucy Wright, and other strong leaders, who capitalized on the religious ferment of the times, spread the Shaker faith throughout New England and the West establishing one community after another: New Lebanon, Sodus, and Groveland in New York; Hancock, Harvard, Tyringham, and Shirley in Massachusetts; Enfield in Connecticut; Canterbury and Enfield in New Hampshire; Alfred and Sabbathday Lake in Maine; South Union and Pleasant Hill in Kentucky; Union Village, Watervliet, White Water, and North Union in Ohio; and West Union in Indiana. There were even two short-lived villages in the South: White Oak, Georgia and Narcoossee, Florida.

By establishing separate villages, the Believers were following one of their basic tenets; that of separation from the 'World.' This allowed them to follow their own way of life while shielding themselves from some of the less wholesome influences of mainstream society.

Each village was organized into 'Families' and each family had 50 to 100 members who lived celibate lives together in the dwellinghouse. The dwellinghouse usually had separate doorways, separate stairs, and, of course, separate sleeping accommodation called retiring rooms. The building had its own kitchen, dining room, weekday meeting room, and often an infirmary.

Each family had its own gardens, orchards, crops, livestock, barns, workshops, and enterprises, and was expected to be financially independent. The central family in each community was called the Church Family. Other families were named for their geographic relationship to the Church Family: East, West, North, and South, or occasionally for another identifying feature such as Hill or Brickyard. A single meetinghouse for worship served the entire community.

A hierarchy of three "orders" also evolved. The first level was the novitiate, or "gathering order," for which a person interested in joining the Shakers was encouraged to try the life and see if it was suitable. A couple, or a family with children, could remain together during this trial period. The next level was the junior order whose members freely gave their labour to the community, but retained their own property and possessions. Of course, members were free to return to the 'World' at any time if they felt the Shaker life was not for them. The final

level was the senior order whose members signed the Covenant to declare their full spiritual and material commitment to the Society. Since Shakers believed in communal ownership, all personal property and worldly goods were turned over to the Society. There was also a children's order to look after the children of couples who joined, or for homeless and unwanted children. At age twenty-one, a person was free to choose the Shaker life or go to the 'World.'

Each Shaker Family had three sets of leaders for spiritual, business, and domestic concerns. The spiritual leaders (and leaders of the village in general) were the Elders and Eldresses - two Brothers and two Sisters chosen to lead the village in matters of worship and conduct. They also heard confessions of sin regularly from the members. Some of the Elders and Eldresses were exceptionally talented people. Consider the talents of Elder Henry Blinn of Canterbury, New Hampshire. Blinn wrote books, printed and bound them, surveyed land, kept bees, blacksmithed, printed the Shaker newspaper, made furniture and boxes, worked as a dentist, made false teeth, coopered, carved in stone, worked on the farm, carded wool, taught school, made paint and painted the meetinghouse, and in his spare time planted the first arboretum in New Hampshire in 1886. Mother Ann taught that if you improve in one talent, God will give you more.

For business matters, the Believers entrusted two men and two women to be Trustees to manage the family's finances. During the early years, they were the only Shakers allowed to go into the World to transact business. Two Deacons and two Deaconesses were in charge of the practical matters of village life, supervising industry, organizing work schedules, and seeing that everyone was properly fed and clothed.

Since equality of the sexes was another basic tenet of Shakerism, it was natural to have male and female leaders in the community. No doubt, the fact that Mother Ann was herself a woman had something to do with this forward-looking attitude. She taught her followers that God was not a Trinity, but a duality -- both Father and Mother. Man and Woman were created in the image of God, and, as such, deserved equal respect.

The final and highest authority in Shaker leadership was the ministry at New Lebanon, which was regarded as the "capital" of the Shaker world. These Elders and Eldresses were revered because their authority descended in a direct line from Mother Ann. Some of these men and women were remarkable leaders. For example, Elder Frederick Evans went to England to lecture on vegetarianism and ventilation; he also persuaded Abraham Lincoln to free the Shakers from the military draft, and shared ideas with Tolstoy through correspondence.

One of the keys to success was order in every part of their life. Order in the physical environment was extremely important. To avoid chaos in the dwellings and workshops, furnishings and tools were marked to indicate their proper location. Mother Ann had advised her followers to keep things in such order that they could be found day or night.

To help maintain order, the dwellinghouses had built-in storage, especially in the attic. The attic of the Church Family at Canterbury, New Hampshire has two under-eaves storage spaces, six closets, 14 cupboards, and 101 drawers all conveniently numbered. The Church Family dwelling at Enfield, New Hampshire features 860 built-in drawers, about nine for each inhabitant. The pegboard which surrounds most rooms at a height of six feet were also helpful in keeping order. Many items would be hung from the pegs including chairs to make cleaning easier. Five to ten thousand pegs would be used in a village depending, of course, on the number of buildings.

They also maintained order by living according to a set of standards called the Millennial Laws, which dictated in minute detail not only the religious but also the temporal life of the Believers. These regulations covered daily conduct, dress, contact with the World, and even such minutiae as the size of the mirrors (those larger than 12 inches by 18 inches "ought never to be purchased by Believers"), the colour of beds (green was the primary choice), or the way the hands should be clasped (right thumb over left).

With one hundred people living in a dwellinghouse, it simply worked best for the Family to do things according to a set schedule. The Shakers rose to the sound of a bell between 4 and 5 a.m. during the summer and an hour later in winter. Tardy members who lingered in bed were called "old slugs."

A lazy fellow it implies
Who in the morning hates to rise;
When all the rest are up at four,
He wants to sleep a little more.
When others into meeting swarm,
He keeps his nest so good and warm,
That sometimes when the Sisters come
To make the beds and sweep the room,
Who do we find wrap'd up so snug?
Ah! Who is it but Mr. Slug.

After a few moments of kneeling in silent prayer, they dress and set about their tasks. The Sisters go to the kitchen to begin making breakfast or to the household tasks of making the beds and cleaning the rooms while the brothers tend to chores in the barns or lay out the day's work in the workshops.

Breakfast was an hour and a half after rising, dinner was at noon, and supper at 6 p.m. The Believers entered the dining room in an orderly fashion and ate in silence. "Ye shall have no talking, laughing, sneering, winking, blinking, hanging and lounging on the railings, hugging, fumbling, and fawning over each other, when going to the table," reminded the Holy Orders in 1841. The members were expected to "Shaker your plate;" that is, eat everything on your plate.

After supper, the Brothers and Sisters would withdraw to gatherings in their separate retiring rooms. During these meetings, topics of family and community interest might be discussed. The latest scientific developments in agriculture, health, and household arts were popular topics as well as news from other Shaker communities by way of letters or visitors. The meetings also afforded an opportunity for additional worship, and dances and songs might be practised for the community worship on Sunday.

"Union meetings" between Brothers and Sisters were also held during weekday evenings. On these occasions, the Brothers and Sisters would sit facing each other from a distance of a few feet. They might converse on topics of similar interest or sing. After these meetings, the Family retired for the night. The occupants of a retiring room were required to go to bed at the same time, typically nine in winter and ten in summer.

On Sunday, the Shakers gathered for worship in the meetinghouse. This building was constructed to provide a large open floor space without any obstructions. It was plainly furnished with movable benches. The Brothers and Sisters entered by separate doors and sat at opposite ends of the room. After sitting in silent prayer, an Elder or Eldress might speak to the Believers; afterwards the benches would be removed and the Brothers and Sisters would join in singing and dancing. Although spontaneous in the early years, the dances later became quite choreographed.

Visitors from the World were welcome to attend, as the Shakers thought this was a good way to attract converts. During their peak years, hundreds of visitors would gather to observe the Shakers. The New Lebanon Meetinghouse frequently accommodated 250 Shakers and 400 visitors. In the 1840s, during a period of intense spiritual revival, the worship services became so frenzied that they were closed to the public, and signs were posted to keep people away. To his dismay, Charles Dickens was among the visitors barred from observing the Shakers at worship.

The Shakers were very interested in scientific developments, particularly in technology useful in farming and domestic chores. During their peak years, they were very up-to-date and frequently ahead of their time in farming and sanitation. In 1826, they erected the famous round stone dairy barn at Hancock, Massachusetts. This design permitted the Brothers to walk a few steps around the centre to feed the ring of cattle around them. The Shakers often installed running water or electricity before their neighbours. The Shaker use of water for various mills and industries was so efficient that other farmers in the area said Shaker water was not any good when they were done with it because it was all worn out!

In 1877, the Shakers at Sabbathday Lake were adapting the use of the metric system which appealed to them because it was more logical and precise.

The Shakers were especially notable for their genius in inventing devices to save labour and do work more efficiently. Perhaps the best known Shaker invention was the flat broom.

Brother Theodore Bates of Watervliet, New York watched the Sisters sweeping with the common round broom and realized they were wasting time and effort. He did not offer to help sweep, but he did flatten the brooms to make them more effective. Other inventions credited to the Shakers include the circular saw, the common clothespin, the double-chambered stove, cut nails, the metal pen, water-repellant fabric, and an improved clothes washing machine. Their washing machine used water for both cleaning and for mechanical power, and was so efficient it was not only purchased by hotels in Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago, but also won a gold medal at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition.

As Eldress Emeline Hart became tired of baking only a dozen pies at a time, she invented the revolving oven capable of baking 60 pies or 70 loaves of bread at one time on its four round revolving shelves.

The Shakers freely shared their inventions and ideas. When Gail Borden visited New Lebanon in 1853, the Shakers let him experiment with their vacuum pan which they used for condensing fruit juices and extracts. Gail Borden successfully condensed milk in it and went on to found the Borden Company. Consequently, the Shakers who initially had not believed in registering patents on their inventions, considering it to be a form of monopoly and a selfish, unchristian practice, changed their views. However, when other business men from the World began taking advantage of Shaker inventions for themselves, Believers gradually began to accept the practice of patenting.

From the beginning, work was an integral part of Shaker life. Mother Ann urged followers to "put your hands to work and your hearts to God." The Shaker communities began as agricultural settlements dependent on the production of their own food for survival. Farm surpluses brought the Believers their first outside income. Their preserved fruits and vegetables, apple sauce, and maple syrup proved to be very lucrative commodities. One of the earliest industries was producing and selling garden seeds. The Shakers were probably the first to package seeds in paper envelopes, which they sold as far south as New Orleans. A wide variety of medicinal herbs were grown, processed, and prepared for home use and eventually sold to the World. They raised broom corn and produced a large variety of brooms and brushes.

The Sisters supplied the community's textile needs, spinning, weaving, and tailoring products in wool, cotton, and linen. Silkworms were raised in Kentucky and the silk woven into colourful kerchiefs. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the New Hampshire communities sold machine-knit sweaters to colleges throughout New England. The Shakers also designed and marketed the "Dorothy" cloak, named after Eldress Dorothy Durgin. Constructed of imported French wool broadcloth, the cloak was practical and stylish enough to appeal to the most discriminating of customers, including Mrs. Grover Cleveland, who wore one to her husband's presidential inaugural ball. Incidentally, the New Lebanon Sisters made a second cloak for Mrs. Cleveland because they had found a flaw in the original one -- an imperfection so minute that no one today can find it in the one they did not send. "Trifles

make perfection, but perfection itself is no trifle," say the Shakers. The Sisters also wove straw hats and made bonnets from palm leaf imported from Cuba. Baskets made from poplar and black ash in a wide variety of shapes and sizes were also made for sale to the World.

The Shaker joiners, carpenters, and cabinetmakers produced a wide range of wooden items. Pails, tubs, barrels, dippers, oval boxes, spinning wheels, table swifts, chairs, and other furniture came from their shops. The New Lebanon Shakers made chairs in large quantities, issuing catalogues of stools, straight chairs and rocking chairs in sizes from "0" to "7". The beauty of Shaker furniture and other objects derives from their perfect functionalism. The Believers glorified God by achieving perfection with the work of their hands. Thomas Merton commented, "The peculiar grace of a Shaker chair is due to the fact that it was made by someone capable of believing that an angel might come and sit in it." The Shakers, however, do not wish to be remembered for the objects they crafted, but rather for the beliefs that made those objects what they are.

During the 1850s, the Shaker membership peaked at approximately 6000. The Believers have now come full circle to the point where there are the same number in America today as when Mother Ann arrived in 1774. While their decline is often blamed on their celibacy, this is too simplistic an answer as there are a great many social and economic factors involved. American society changed from a nation of farmers and craftsmen to a nation of factory workers and businessmen; from rural to urban. Although Shaker products were widely esteemed for their quality, they began to lose ground to mass-produced goods. The Civil War disrupted trade routes and almost bankrupted the Kentucky Shakers as both the Union and Confederate troops marched through their villages and demanded food and supplies. The great religious revivals from which Shakerism drew so many converts died down as the nineteenth century ebbed, and more secular interests took their place. The quality of leadership declined and mismanagement of funds hurt many communities.

Today the remaining Shakers live at Sabbathday Lake, Maine. They still go about their work, raising sheep, and producing candies and herbal products which are sold to the World. You can visit them there and join in a service of worship held in the meetinghouse built in 1794. They may not be dancing, but the Believers still sing some of the 10,000 songs they composed.

Mother Ann, herself, foretold the rise and fall of the brave new world she founded when she predicted that when there were as many Shakers left as there are fingers on your hand, there will come another revival and a second flowering of the faith. The day is perhaps not far distant when only five Shakers will remain. The Believers and the World can only wait to see what will happen.

HERITAGE NIGHT

February 25, 1997

Abstract from "Historically Speaking" (written by Karen Walker):

The Cobourg and District Historical Society celebrated Heritage Night on February 25th with an Open House at the Society's Archives. This wonderful resource for the preservation of the history of Cobourg and Hamilton and Haldimand Townships began in 1980 when Marion Hagen and other founding members of the Society began to gather material. Bequests from the estates of Lenah Field Fisher and Lois Anne Verney with further gifts from Dr. Charlotte Horner and Margaret Spragge formed the core of the early collection. Subsequently, hundreds of other valuable pieces of local history have been acquired. Today, the archives houses diaries, reminiscences, scrapbooks, and other personal papers. Included too is a wealth of area memorabilia ranging from postcards to event programmes to numerous photographs of local people and places. The collection also holds records of area organizations and businesses. Last, but not least, the newly refurbished window frame from Faraday Hall - and the inspiration for our logo - is proudly displayed in the reception area of the Archives.

Originally located in the old Armoury, the Society's Archives moved into its present location with the 1995 opening of the C. Gordon King Centre.

LARRY O'CONNOR: FROM COBOURG TO THE OLYMPIC GAMES¹

by

JAMES WORRALL, O.C., Q.C., LL.B.

Honorary President, Canadian Olympic Association
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Lawrence "Larry" G. O'Connor was born in Toronto on September 22, 1916. His father, Laurence Vincent O'Connor, was a prominent lawyer in Lindsay, Ontario. His mother, May (née McNevin), died 11 months after Larry was born. His father later married Ella Brady of Lindsay and they gave Larry two step-sisters, Constance and Frances.

Larry's early schooling was in Lindsay, but when he was about 13 years old, his father was appointed to the bench as County Judge in Cobourg. The family then moved to Cobourg and took up residence at 154 King Street East.

Larry attended the school at St. Joseph's Convent for a year or so, and then completed his high school education at Cobourg Collegiate Institute (C.C.I.) in June of 1933. His graduation diploma, dated December 9, 1933, was signed by the Principal, R.N. McKenzie.

While at C.C.I., Larry became involved in track and field activities. He was introduced to the hurdles event and was coached by Arthur Ravensdale, a Cobourg athlete who competed for Canada in the hurdles at the 1932 Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

Press clippings refer to Larry's athletic success in the Ontario Athletic Commission's 9th Annual Schoolboy Track and Field Championships in 1933. Together with Bob Cooper, another C.C.I. athlete, he was chosen to attend the Ontario Athletic Commission Camp at Lake Couchiching that summer. There he received further training in track and field and did well in the hurdles. He also established himself as a swimmer, being the first boy to swim the one-mile distance to an island out in the lake. This exploit was marked with a donation of a plaque to the camp from Larry's father, Judge O'Connor. As an Orillia newspaper reporter wrote from the camp:

Judge O'Connor of Cobourg was present with Mrs. O'Connor. His Lordship showed his interest in the Camp by presenting a shield on which the name of every boy who swam from the Camp to the island off the Camp each year is to be inscribed. The first one to get his name inscribed on the shield was his son Lawrence, who had an especially fine record in Camp as a modest boy of good spirit and character.

¹ Information was garnered from photographs, newspaper clippings, documents and so forth from Larry O'Connor's personal scrapbook.

Larry finished C.C.I. when he was not yet 17 years of age and his parents deemed him too young to apply for university. Instead, he was enrolled for one year at the Jesuit Collège Brébeuf in Montreal to learn French. In September of 1934, Larry entered University College at the University of Toronto where he studied political science and economics.

Even though a freshman, Larry made the Varsity first team in track and field as a hurdler. I was in my final year at McGill by then and was able to defeat Larry in the two hurdle events - the 120-yard high hurdles and the 220-yard low hurdles - for the intercollegiate championship title of 1934.

When I moved to Toronto in September of 1935 to teach at Upper Canada College, I enrolled at University of Toronto in the Faculty of Education. Thus I became eligible to compete in the interfaculty meet that autumn. Once again I was able to defeat Larry in the hurdles, but that was the last time. Larry and I continued to train together during the ensuing months, as rivals and as friends. In the spring of 1936, Larry and I were competing for the West End YMCA track club in Toronto under coach, Hector "Hec" Phillips, who himself had been a member of Canada's Olympic teams in 1920 and 1924.

On July 10 and 11, 1936, the Canadian Olympic Trials were held in Montreal. Larry and I both qualified to go to the Olympic Games in Berlin, Larry in the 110-metre hurdles and I in both the 110- and 400-metre hurdles. In qualifying, Larry equalled the Canadian record. The *Toronto Star* sports writer, Alexandrine Gibb, wrote effusively:

Crack off the reel in the opening event, a Canadian record was equalled when Larry O'Connor of West End YMCA, Toronto, stepped the 110-metre hurdles in 15.2 seconds. O'Connor, who hurdles beautifully - a stylist if there ever was one - was pressed to the limit by Jimmy Worrall, a Toronto clubmate and former McGill student. They ran neck and neck for the 100 metres and it was only O'Connor's marvellous turn of speed in the last ten metres that beat off Worrall's challenge.

According to an article appearing in an unidentified newspaper, it was reported that on July 15, 1936, at Victoria Hall, Cobourg:

On the occasion of a civic reception to Lawrence G. O'Connor, in appreciation of his sportsmanship and success in qualifying as a representative of Canada at the Olympic Games in Berlin, Germany, 1936, Mayor Delanty made a presentation of \$50 on behalf of the town, and T.F. Hall, K.C., made a presentation of a Gladstone bag on behalf of the Collegiate Institute Board. Tribute was also paid to other Cobourg star athletes - Arthur Ravensdale who competed in the 1932 Olympics and the 1934 British Empire Games; Bobby Cooper, a member also of the 1934 British Empire Games team; and marathon swimmer, Garnet Cochrane.

The July 30, 1936 edition of the *Cobourg World* published a Fisher Studio photographic portrait of Larry in the starting position. On March 4, 1937 the *Cobourg Sentinel Star* reported that Winston Fisher presented this portrait to the Cobourg Collegiate Institute, where, I understand, it still hangs today.

The Canadian Olympic Team assembled in Montreal and sailed for France aboard the S.S. "Duchess of Bedford" on July 17th. O'Connor and I shared a cabin, and also a steamer trunk. The Atlantic crossing took six days, during which time team members got to know one another very well and endeavoured to carry on their training schedules on the decks of the ship. Ironically, in retrospect, fellow ship's passengers included a large contingent of Canadian war veterans and their wives on a pilgrimage to the Great War battlefields and the dedication of the Canadian war memorial at Vimy. The veterans were interested in our athletic careers and in hearing about the competitions we were about to experience in Germany, encounters much more peaceful than those they had experienced in Europe some twenty years earlier.

We arrived in Le Havre on July 26th and took a boat-train to Paris where we were entertained for lunch that day at a typical Parisian *brasserie*, complete with bottles of wine for those who indulged. The remainder of the afternoon and early evening were taken up by a tour of Paris. Late that night we boarded another train, at Gare de l'Est, bound for Berlin. Seventeen hours later we arrived, after sitting up all night in our compartments and getting what sleep we could manage. An official reception greeted us at the Berlin station, complete with red carpet, German army band, and long speeches. We struggled through a rendition of "A Maple Leaf Forever." Loaded onto buses, we were then driven through the flag-bedecked Berlin streets, lined with thousands of cheering people. We were impressed by this warm reception, but much later learned that all teams were greeted in the same way and the crowds were organized by the German authorities as part of an overall public relations campaign.

At the entrance to the Olympic Village, there was yet another reception and a flag-raising ceremony. We all received our Olympic identity cards and finally collapsed in our rooms. Larry and I and the steamer trunk shared a room in one of the four comfortable cottages assigned to our team. The Village was set in park-like surroundings which included a small lake and many trees. It had been built especially for the occasion by the German army and was subsequently used as a military officers' training camp. We found no fault with the accommodation supplied. The set-up was first-class, with every comfort and every opportunity for training and relaxation. At the recreation centre, we were even able to watch the first television in the history of Olympic events. Our Canadian team cottages were next to the Village's training track, which was extremely convenient, of course. As all of the women's teams were quartered in a separate residence at an institution called *Das Friesenhaus*, close to the Olympic Stadium, we didn't see our Canadian girls very often.

Among the documents Larry saved in his scrapbook was the following:

Welcome to the Olympic Village

Here is your home for the immediate future. Here your friends and fellow competitors reside, a community of comrades serving the same ideal and rejoicing to see you, to live with you, and to enjoy cheerful social hours along with you.

All has been created with the aim of serving your welfare, and the orders and regulations have been drawn up with careful thought for your sake so as to assure for each of you the undisturbed enjoyment of this home. The Olympic flags, including the flag of your country, wave over this Village. The bells each morning ring out the Olympic Hymn.

May the Olympic spirit and the Olympic peace rule here from the first day to the last. Help us to preserve and honour this peace.

The Village has been built by the German Army for the Olympic Games. For the Army, inspired with the love of sport and loyal to the Olympic ideal, this has been a joyous task. The German Army joins with the German nation in bidding you a hearty welcome.

Despite all the talk of peace and the Olympic spirit, the above document was signed by Field Marshall Von Blomberg, the Reich's Minister of War.

The official Olympic poster for these games showed an heroic Aryan male figure with an olive wreath on his head, the five Olympic rings, and Berlin's symbol, the Brandenburg Gate.

The Opening Ceremony of the Games of the XI Olympiad took place at the Olympic Stadium on August 1, 1936. Our team assembled at the Village, was loaded onto busses, and was driven to the *Maifeld*, a large sports field adjacent to the Stadium. The women's teams joined us there. The teams of all the various countries taking part lined up in alphabetical order; that is, alphabetical according to German usage which meant that we marched as *Kanada*, and occupied an advantageous position at the centre of the assembled teams on the field. As I had been selected to carry the Canadian flag (the Red Ensign), I stood at the head of our team, along with a member of the Hitler Youth who carried our country placard. While we were thus assembled on the *Maifeld*, the official party of Hitler, Goering, Goebbels, and the rest of them, together with members of the International Olympic Committee walked in front of all the teams leading down onto the field of the stadium. Personally, I certainly had a great view being within about ten feet of the official party.

We marched through a long dark tunnel, suddenly emerging into the bright sunlight to the cheers of over 100,000 spectators in the stadium. Olympic Games' tradition at that time demanded the head teams march past the official viewing stand and salute the head of state.

Therefore, I was instructed to dip the flag and the team members behind me were instructed to give the Olympic Salute which had routinely been the same salute given by Canadian teams (and many others) in all the previous Games. Unfortunately, since the salute involved raising the right arm above the shoulder, the crowd easily misinterpreted it as the Nazi salute. We received great cheers from the crowd, but later, much teasing and some criticism as well. Once all the teams were assembled on the field, we stood and watched the ceremonies - the arrival of the Olympic Flame and the lighting of the Olympic Cauldron (replicating the first Olympic Torch relay in Greece), the raising of the Olympic Flag, the pronouncement of the Athletes' Oath, and the release of the symbolic "Doves of Peace" (pigeons). All the while, the airship "Hindenburg" circled slowly overhead. Hitler, for once, did not have a chance to make a speech and simply followed Olympic protocol by stating, in German, "I declare open the Games of the XI Olympiad." After all the teams left the stadium and returned to the Village, the spectators were treated to an exhibition of group gymnastics by German young people. The Opening Ceremony as a glitzy entertainment extravaganza was a long way in the future.

Track and Field events all took place at the Olympic Stadium during the first week of the Games. I competed first in the 400-metre hurdle event but failed to make the semi-final, finishing fourth in my heat. Larry and I then competed in separate heats in the 110-metre hurdles and once again, I just failed to make the semi-final, finishing third in my heat. Larry, on the other hand, qualified first for the semi-final and then, on August 6th, ran in the final of the event. While finishing in sixth place in 14.9 seconds, Larry ran his best-ever race. The event was won by American, Forrest Towns in 14.2 seconds. Towns had set a new world record of 14.1 seconds in a previous heat. However, Larry's feat marked the first time that a Canadian had reached the Olympic hurdles finals since 1920. All this took place at a time when starting blocks were not used; instead we had to dig our own starting holes with the trowels handed to us by officials as we approached the starting line.

Larry's stirring performance was received with great enthusiasm back in Cobourg as documented by the congratulatory telegrams sent to him in Berlin, and the laudatory articles in the Cobourg press.

Larry's Berlin Olympic experience was actually the launching pad for his subsequent stellar hurdling career. He was one of several outstanding athletes invited to compete in post-Olympic competitions in England, Norway, and Sweden. The London, England meet set the best athletes of the British Empire against those of the United States. Larry placed fifth in the 120-yard hurdles. He then travelled as part of Canadian and American athletes to meets in Sweden and Norway where he improved on his performances.

On October 23, 1936, while competing for the University of Toronto in the intercollegiate track championships held in Montreal, Larry shattered the existing intercollegiate records in both the 120-yard high hurdles and the 220-yard low hurdles. These accomplishments were recognized by the Toronto newspapers:

Larry O'Connor stood out today as one of Canada's most brilliant sons in the realm of track and field. The Irishman...seemingly flowed over the barriers yesterday to establish two Canadian hurdling records against the smartest of the east's collegiate speedsters (*Toronto Star*, October 24, 1936).

And,

O'Connor's time of 24.3 seconds (in the 220-yard low hurdles) clipped 8/10 of a second from the mark established by Jim Worrall of McGill in 1934 (*Toronto Telegram*, October 23, 1936).

During the winter of 1936-37, Larry continued training and competing. On March 12, 1937, at the Maple Leaf Games held at Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto, he clipped 2/10 of a second off the world record for the indoor 60-yard hurdle race with a time of 7.3 seconds. As noted in the *Globe and Mail* for March 13, 1937:

Larry O'Connor, long-gearred University of Toronto hurdler, cracked the world's 60-yard hurdle record at Maple Leaf Games last night. The Canadian Olympic representative was chased to the tape in 7.3 seconds by Eugene Record of McGill University. Jim Worrall, Toronto was third.

That summer of 1937, Cobourg was celebrating its centennial. The programme reads: "Cobourg Centennial - 1837-1937. Five days of merrymaking, July 29 to August 2, 1937." Larry was featured on the programme along with John Loaring of Windsor, silver medallist in the 400-metre hurdles in Berlin. Their competition on this occasion was somewhat unusual as there were

patriotic pageants, sailing races, street carnival, Miss Cobourg contest, dances, midway show, Cobourg's birthday cake, monster parade, historical floats, baby show, vaudeville concert, grand display of fireworks,...and...J.W. Loaring of Windsor and Larry O'Connor of Cobourg, Canada's 1936 Olympic Representatives. An Opportunity for Centennial Visitors to see two brilliant Canadian athletes. [signed] Maurice Booth, Mayor.

The *Cobourg Sentinel Star* of August 5 reported on the race as follows:

Larry O'Connor wins in low hurdle event. Home-town boy wins Cobourg invitation. Competing in a 120-yard low hurdles event, the hurdlers gave a magnificent display which thrilled the crowd which filled the park to capacity. While he held a slight lead at the 3/4 mark, Loaring was not able to fend off the burst of speed displayed by O'Connor in the last 25 yards, and was nosed out by less than a yard. Called to the judges stand, both

runners were congratulated by Mayor Booth. On behalf of the Rotary Club, Col. J.W. Odell presented O'Connor with a desk set.

(Incidentally, Arthur Ravensdale was the starter for the track and field events.)

One month later, Larry competed in the zone trials for qualifying for the British Empire Games to be held in Sydney, Australia, in February of 1938. A headline in the *Hamilton Spectator* proclaimed "O'Connor Iron Man in Games." He won the 220-yard dash and the 120-yard high hurdles, was a member of the winning 440-yard relay team, and obviously qualified for the Canadian team.

The Canadian British Empire Games assembled in Vancouver, and after three weeks at sea, arrived in Sydney in late January of 1938. Larry competed in the 220-yard dash and made the final on February 11, when he finished fourth. He always said that he did not enjoy flat running as much as hurdles, although he was good at it. On February 14, Larry finished a very close second in the 120-yard hurdles final, running his best personal time of 14.2 seconds. The *Sydney Morning Herald* of February 14, 1938, reported: "Over the last obstacle in the final 120-yard hurdles championship at the Empire Games, with T.P. Lavery (South Africa) leading to win in world's record time, L. O'Connor finished second...Lavery's time - 14 seconds - was disallowed as a world record [because of an alleged wind factor]." Larry rounded out his performance in Australia by winning a gold medal as a member of the record-breaking 440-yard relay team.

Larry returned to Canada immediately after the British Empire Games in order to complete his B.A. degree in June. We both were enrolled at Osgoode Law School in September of 1938 and graduated together in June of 1941.

In those years, Larry continued his hurdling career and competed in both Canada and the United States in many prestigious meets. Unfortunately, I do not have any detailed records of most of those performances. However, on August 2, 1939, Larry set a Canadian record in the 110-metre high hurdles at the Ontario Track and Field Championships. A couple of days later, Larry was in Cobourg to participate in a Civic Holiday meet. Another Cobourg athlete, John Lucas, was his opposition in a 120-yard low hurdles race which Larry won.

As an indication to you, a 1997 audience, of Larry's stature on the Canadian sports scene almost 60 years ago, I can report that when the *Toronto Star Weekly* of December 30, 1939, published photos of the seven most prominent athletes of the year, Larry was among them. "Galaxy of Canadian Stars occupied world sports spotlight during 1939. - Larry O'Connor...annexed every major hurdling event in the Dominion."

Larry accepted a position with the law firm of James McNevin in Chatham, Ontario. He joined the Canadian Army early in 1942 and married Helen Conway of Huntsville in May. Helen's brother, Abbot Conway, was a teammate of ours on the 1936 Olympic team and also a

teammate of Larry's to the 1938 British Empire Games. While in the army, Larry continued to compete, with success, in army championships. After crossing to France with the Canadian Second Division one week after D-Day, Larry was wounded at Caen, and, following a stint in hospital in England, was returned to Canada. After retiring from the army late in 1944, he rejoined the Chatham law firm under the name McNevin, Gee, and O'Connor, and became prominent as counsel in his profession. He was active in Chatham community life all during his career.

Larry's interest in the Olympic Movement continued and he made contributions whenever possible throughout his entire life. Even at the age of 71, and with a pacemaker, Larry ran with the Olympic Torch for a kilometre on a highway near Chatham on January 1, 1988, as part of the cross-Canada Olympic Torch Relay before the Calgary Olympic Winter Games of February, 1988.

Cobourg has many reasons to be proud of my friend Larry O'Connor, both as an athlete and as a human being. This evening, I have singled out his sports career, for which he won many honours. He was an Olympic finalist and a British empire games gold- and silver-medallist. He held a world record, contributed to a British Empire Games record, and held five Canadian national records as well as two Canadian intercollegiate records. In 1939, the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada awarded him the Norton Crow Memorial Trophy for "Outstanding Athletic Performance and Sportsmanship." Also in 1939, he received the John W. Davies Trophy from the National Track and Field Committee recognizing him as the "most outstanding Canadian athlete in track and field." In 1967, Larry was elected to the Canadian Amateur Athletic Hall of Fame (now administered by the Canadian Olympic Association) and, in 1991, the University of Toronto inducted him into its Sports Hall of Fame.

Larry passed away in Chatham on September 6, 1995.

THE DRESSLER STORY: TO DREAM, TO DARE, TO PERSIST, TO WIN

by

Barbara Garrick

Marie Dressler is considered one of the greatest comediennes of her generation and one of Hollywood's best loved stars. She was, at one time, the highest paid star in the movie industry, earning more than Greta Garbo or Mickey Mouse. In 1930, at sixty years of age, she won the coveted Oscar for Best Actress. In the early 1930s, Dressler was North America's top box office draw, earning \$4000 a week, and in August 1933, she was the first woman to grace the cover of *Time* magazine.

While these accolades tell of her phenomenal success in the movie world, they only relate to the later years of Dressler's career. A discussion of her early life, stage career, and her transition to silent and talking pictures will show that Dressler was a youngster who had a dream of being on the stage; that she dared to follow that dream, and persisted in the development of her craft, through times of success and failure. At an age when most stars are long forgotten by Hollywood producers, Dressler reached the pinnacle of her career. Dressler's life story is worth recounting, not only for her triumphs, but also for her determination to be successful in show business, and for the immeasurable persistence she demonstrated in following her dream to its fulfilment. Congratulations, Marie, you had the fortitude to be a winner!

Dressler was a mover in more ways than one! She was born Leila Koerber, November 9, 1869 in Cobourg, Ontario of Alexander Rudolph Koerber and Annie Henderson of Port Hope. Her Austrian-born father was an excellent musician who had taught music by his own method at Princeton University. However, due to his fits of temper, the family was always on the move. During their stay in Cobourg, they lived at 212 King Street West, a house which they rented from the Field family. Koerber was a music teacher and the organist at St. Peter's Anglican Church. Dressler describes this itinerant way of life when she writes:

I was always going somewhere. When I was a child, it was with the family, moving all over Canada and the State of Michigan - from Cobourg to Toronto, to Lindsay, to Saginaw to Bay City. And then, when I started touring with the show companies, wherever I hung my hat became home.

Leila's mother often presented short dramas for community audiences. On one occasion, five-year old Leila, dressed as a cherub, was placed on a pedestal on the stage. She was warned not to move. The child did not move. However, the curtain did, and it swept the cherub off the pedestal and into the lap of Lindsay's greatest "ladies' man." the audience saw this as hilarious and gales of laughter followed. Leila seems to have assumed that she was funny, and that people would laugh at her antics. Dressler remembers this incident as one of the influences that led to her playing the clown in her early years.

As the Koerbers travelled from town to town, Leila always had to make new friends. Knowing that she was good at play-acting, Leila often turned to this activity as a way of being accepted among her peers. Roberta Ann Raider,¹ who chose to write her PhD dissertation on the acting skills of Dressler, suggests that such acting games strengthened the girl's desire to be a professional actor. Another woman who knew Leila as a playmate says:

Leila was always the ringleader. She usually wrote, directed and starred in the productions and because she was so much fun, we were always glad to let her. However, her mischievous nature sometimes led our parents to question the desirability of her influence.

Another Saginaw, Michigan neighbour recalls that the father disapproved of his daughter's productions, and that Leila often irritated him by threatening to go over to Boardwell's Opera House and dance on a barrel. Finally, when Leila was fourteen, she wrote to the Nevada Travelling Stock Company requesting a job. She informed the company that she was eighteen years old, and that she was an accomplished actress. Without an audition, she was hired.

What kind of company would engage an actress sight unseen? Dressler later called it "a cheap dramatic company of eleven" but "a wonderful school." She evaluates the Nevada Company this way:

The type of theatrical company which would engage a fourteen year old girl for a leading lady seems to have vanished from the face of the earth. In those days, there were hundreds of companies composed of broken old professionals who had come down the ladder and eager amateurs on the way up. Nevada's collection ran the scale from has-beens to would-bes.

To save the family from embarrassment, Leila now called herself Marie Dressler after an aunt. As Marie Dressler her first role with the Nevada Company was as a cigarette girl in "Under Two Flags." She recalls that the actors had little time to learn parts, and were often judged on their skill in ad libbing. Dressler, in summarizing the way plays were produced at that time, notes that "If they [actors] had a sketchy outline of the plot and a rough idea of the characterization, a troupe of old hands could almost create a play as they went along."

Then suddenly, the Nevada Company was stranded in Michigan without funds. Our would-be star, without money or a job, had little choice but to walk the railroad ties from Edmore to Saginaw to rejoin her family. What a disappointment for a youngster with a dream of a future on the stage! Yet there had been value in the experience of performing with professional actors. She had learned how much work and dedication would be necessary if she were to

¹ Raider, Roberta Ann. A descriptive Study of the Acting of Marie Dressler. University of Michigan PhD Thesis. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms. 1970.

seriously pursue her chosen career.

Dressler was not about to abandon her dream. She then joined the Robert Grau Opera Company as a chorus member earning eight dollars a week. When the leading lady, Agnes Halleck, broke her ankle, Dressler was asked to take the role of Katisha in "The Mikado." This comedic role was a very desirable one which Dressler enjoyed playing with great success. It is interesting to note that the actress played this famous role seventy-six times in her stage career.

Dressler's road to success was not to be an easy one. She always insisted on being paid regularly. Finally Grau became annoyed at her pestering and sent her to Philadelphia where he said there was a job for her. There was no job in Philadelphia. Dressler had been tricked. Determinedly she consulted a newspaper, and found that the Starr Opera Company was in town. She begged for a job, and with the help of two actresses who had known her on the road, the manager, Mr. Deshon, outraged at the way she had been treated, gave her an audition, and a job.

With the Starr Opera Company, Dressler played several comic operas including "Chimes of Normandy," "The Mikado," "The Baron," and "The Three Cloaks." The youngster must have done well for her salary was raised from eight to eighteen dollars a week. The company played long runs in Philadelphia and Detroit. The actress saw that these audiences were more sophisticated, and expected a higher quality of performance. In this way, she was challenged to improve her acting skills.

Dressler next performed with the Bennet-Moulton Opera Company with George A. Baker, manager and director. This company played week-long stands in towns and small cities. During this period, Dressler played thirty-eight roles from prima donnas to old women, and even royalty. Dressler explains why she was often the queen, and sometimes, even the king:

Because our ermine robes were designed for a giantess and because I was the tallest woman in the company, I often played royalty. As a general thing I played the queen. But if the king had spent too much time propped against a local bar, I was given his beard and his lines.

While Dressler was beginning to get wide experiences on the stage, it was as Barbara, in "The Black Hussars," that she received the first chance to gain rapport with the audience. While other royal roles had been ones of distance and reserve, it was with the character, Barbara, that she began to perfect her natural flair for the comedic stage business. Once she knocked a baseball into the audience, which to her surprise, brought a great response.

In her next role as the lead in "La Perichole," the actress had the opportunity to play a young girl who was given too much wine by a gentleman with ulterior motives. Her character became a little bit tight, a little bit tough, a little saucy, but still very fetching. Thus under the

tutelage of the demanding George Baker, Dressler learned how to create appealing characterizations. I suggest that Dressler's ability to play characters which were comical and yet human enough to gain one's sympathy was the key element to her success on stage and in the movies.

Having watched Eddie Foy, a top comedian of that day, perform in Chicago, Dressler decided that as Foy had continual trouble looking for his props, she would never use a property of any sort. Once she had made this decision, Dressler could develop routines that left her free to move about on stage and to improvise. Pieces of her costume became her trademark in comedy. Since the comedienne designed and made all her own costumes, she could use the latest fad in fashion to create an outrageous dress. On one occasion she learned that twirling her hat gave the audience a laugh. She comments, "Audiences don't laugh because they want to, but because they can't help it. It takes years of study and thought to learn how to demand that laugh."

Following her meeting with Eddie Foy, Dressler went on the road in "The Tar and The Tartar," and luckily she was hired as a replacement for the lead role after the show had gone into production. This show took her to New York. She had been on the road for nine years, and now in 1892, she had finally reached the "Great White Way."

Reaching Broadway is one accomplishment; becoming a star on the legitimate stage is quite another. The actress was young, with great aspirations, and with the health and energy required to struggle for success. When she did not have a stage role, she appeared at the Old Atlantic Garden in the Bowery, and at Koster and Bial's on Twenty-third Street where she sang two songs a night for the much-needed ten dollars. Around her was a maze of activity. At this time Broadway fare consisted of musical comedy, serious drama, vaudeville and burlesque thus giving her a choice of the entertainment media in which to perform. Dressler's own words reveal the quandary she felt she was in: "I longed to make good, but I was handicapped in spite of a lovely voice. I knew that I belonged in the theatre but I didn't know where. I was too homely for a prima donna and too big for a soubrette."

Maurice Barrymore, playwright and director, had an answer. He saw a comedy future for Dressler and cast her as Cunigone in his production of "The Robber of the Rhine." Consequently, on May 28, 1892, Dressler appeared in her first Broadway role, but alas, the show was unsuccessful and soon closed. All was not lost for she had been seen by George Lederer, a leading Broadway producer, who recognized her talents and asked her to play as a supporting actress to the famed Lillian Russell. This was Dressler's big break. On November 24, 1893, she opened with Russell at the Casino Theatre in "Princess Nicotine." After a long successful run on Broadway, this show toured the country making Dressler well-known across America.

What was the nature of Dressler's acting style which allowed her such success? The actress had built her craft day-by-day, and her great asset became the ability to-use her very mobile

face. She could show expressions of outrage, boredom, or other assorted means of dissent whenever her fellow actors got pretentious or stupid. Whenever there was a gap or whenever an actor was weak, Dressler could steal the show by ad libbing, or by performing a gag she had learned on the road. She also learned to reach across the footlights and talk to the audience.

Dressler had been told earlier by Barrymore that her face was her fortune. Keeping this suggestion in mind, the performer moved ahead playing such comedic roles as Aurora in "Girofle-Girofla" and Mrs. Malaprop in "The Rivals," both important roles for an actress wishing to be a comedienne. Some time between 1894 and 1900 she married George Hoppert, a theatre employee. One news source maintains that Dressler gave birth to a baby girl who died in infancy. Dressler never talked about this part of her life. I do not know if she divorced Hoppert, or if he died.

Four years after she reached Broadway, Dressler experienced a real triumph in that she was identified by both the critics and the public for her performance as Flo Honeydew in the "Lady Slavey." This comedy played for two years and then went on tour. Dressler took ill and returned to New York. Her manager, A.E. Erlanger, accused her of shamming, and had her blacklisted on the New York stage. Dressler had to take to the road again, this time with the Rich and Harris Touring Company in which she played Dottie Dimple in "Courtied Into Court." She sang Negro songs, danced the 'cakewalk' and continued to experiment with facial expression. According to a comment written during that period by Peter Robinson of the *San Francisco Chronicle*:

She is a genuine woman comedienne, as distinguished from a soubrette (a lady's maid who gives saucy one-liners.) She acts with intelligence and with clear insight into comic propositions. She contorts her face until it looks like the wattles of a turkey gobbler in a rage...She is not afraid to look unattractive; that makes her the comedienne unusual.

Back in New York, Dressler continued in musical comedy and in vaudeville. Then daring and adventurous, as always, she decided to play the Palace Theatre in London, England. There her show ran for thirty weeks, drawing an overwhelmingly favourable response from the British. Buoyed by her success, she risked investing her own funds in two more London shows which failed abjectly. Dressler fell into such debt that she had to work two years on vaudeville circuits to become financially solvent.

Despite her great debt, and the hardships of the vaudeville circuit, Dressler achieved some personal happiness, for she met James Dalton who became her 'husband' and manager. Back on Broadway Dressler enjoyed her greatest success in the comedy "Tillie's Nightmare." In this she is Tillie Blobbs, a poor drudge who works in her mother's boarding house. She sits at the piano and sings "Heaven Will Protect The Working Girl." This song is followed by a grandiose dream sequence in which Dressler gives imitations of Sarah Bernhardt and plays the

prima donna of a comic opera. Her style is "about as subtle as a billboard," and a little risqué, but the audiences did not seem to mind. Rather, they found her quite amusing.

There was more to Dressler's portrayal of Tillie Blobbs than funny business. She was able to compel hearty sympathy for the character, thus achieving a balance of comedy and pathos. Dressler believed that "affectation killed comedy, and so she tried to create a sincerity and genuineness of character that reminded the audience of fact not fiction." As audiences sympathized with Tillie Blobbs and took her to heart, so they related to Dressler, making her name an admired household word; in other words, a star. "Tillie's Nightmare" was the play which would later give her a toe-hold in silent movies, as well as giving her real celebrity status.

After the success of "Tillie's Nightmare," life was not so easy for the actress. In the meantime, World War I had begun and Dressler worked tirelessly selling Liberty Bonds. When the war ended, so did Dressler's Broadway career. By this time she was nearly fifty years old. She had to care for James Dalton, an invalid, until his death. No acting offers came her way. Producers and managers were embarrassed when they met her. Her funds ran out. She had to sell a little farm in New Hampshire that she had bought for her retirement. In spite of her adversities, Dressler's daring spirit prevailed. She moved to the Ritz Hotel in New York where an old friend, Albert Keller, the manager, let her a room at a very low rate. Later she accepted the position as hostess for the Ritz Supper Club.

For seven years Dressler lived at the Ritz showing a smiling face to the world, but lamenting privately the lack of career opportunities. If she had reflected upon her life, she would have found much of which to be proud. Not only had she been daring enough to choose a stage career, but also had been successful enough to have earned a thousand dollars a week on the vaudeville stage. Besides becoming a well-paid performer, she had been acclaimed by those of high social standing including Mrs. Styvesant Fish of New York's elite "400," King George the Fifth, and American president, F.D. Roosevelt. Despite this adulation, Dressler was not satisfied to end her life in show business, nor did she have the funds to retire. She longed to get back on the stage where she had entertained thousands with her broad and robust comedy. One would have some difficulty imagining that this trouper would resurface in the entertainment world, and that millions of fans would follow her career in the newest direction - talking pictures.

Dressler's film career began as a result of the success of the play, "Tillie's Nightmare." Mack Sennet, another Canadian, and the creator of the Keystone Kops, had seen the comedy and decided to make a movie from the story. The film, "Tillie's Punctured Romance," caught the public's fancy and paid off the producers very well. Dressler, however, shows badly in the film. Three more films followed but none platforms from which Dressler could spring into feature films. From 1918 until 1927 she did not make any films.

Dressler was at a loss, and began to talk about opening a restaurant in Paris for American

guests. A friend, who was also a Manhattan astrologist, advised her to stay in America. The seer, Nella Webb, predicted that Dressler would have "seven fat years" which would begin on January 17, 1927. And sure enough, on January 17, 1927 - as the August 1933 issue of *Time* reports - movie director, Allan Dwan, telephoned to offer a film role.

Dressler was once again on the silver screen. At this time she came under contract with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. A recent biography of Louis B. Mayer² tells how this very powerful movie magnate felt about Dressler:

Mayer adored Dressler: of all the stars at the studio, he liked her the best...(for) her great feistiness, good humour and charm...He was determined to build her as a motion picture star, seeing the warmth and strength within her that he believed the public would respond to. He was convinced that sexual attractiveness and physical beauty were not essential to stardom...Miss Dressler became one of his very few actor friends, and he learned from her earthy but morally elevated wisdom. He always gave her top billing; towards the end of her life, he would refer to her as "the equal of my own mother" the ultimate compliment.

Despite Mayer's efforts on Dressler's behalf, a most disappointing situation developed. Dressler was under contract to play with comedienne Polly Moran in "The Callahans and the Murphys," a tale of feuding, Irish families in the New York slums. The public loved the outrageous antics of Dressler and Moran. However, when the movie opened at the Lexington Theatre in Manhattan, "the largely Hiberian audience screamed with rage and beat and tore at the screen with their bare hands. Police were called in, aiming hoses at the crowd and ruining many of the seats." M.G.M. was forced to withdraw the movie. Whether the film was destroyed or not I do not know. It is possible that someday someone will find a copy of "The Calahans and The Murphys," and Dressler fans will be able to see for themselves what the fuss was all about. In 1927 this occurrence certainly stymied Dressler.

Friends of Dressler's wrote a script for a "talkie" entitled "Dangerous Females." This two-reel comedy is still considered by many to be hilariously funny. Certainly the popularity of this short film brought Dressler the chance to play in five more films in 1928-29. Her value as box-office draw was on the rise. Her chance to show her versatility came in "The Vagabond Lover" which was meant to showcase bandleader Rudy Vallee. Vallee was weak and Dressler, who was playing a society lady with a broad sense of humour "sparked the otherwise dull movie," showing that she could still keep the patrons laughing.

When Dressler had been a great stage star, other forces were at work on her behalf. On one occasion she had granted an interview to a cub reporter, Frances Marion, of the Hearst

² Higham, Charles. *M.G.M., Louis B. Mayer and the Secret Hollywood*. New York: Dell Publishing, 1994

newspapers, thus giving Marion a career boost. Now Marion was one of the scenarists with M.G.M. who also wished to help the aging star. Marion knew that the sensational Greta Garbo was going to speak for the first time in the film, "Anna Christie." Marion expanded Dressler's role as the waterfront hag, Marthy, in this Eugene O'Neil play. Dressler practically ran away with the show in spite of Garbo's playing the title role. This was a pivotal situation. Dressler's career took fire. In 1930 she made six more pictures, one of which would bring her the Best Actress award for that year. Between 1927 and 1933, she appeared in twenty-two films. In 1933 Dressler starred in "Dinner at Eight," still considered a classic today along with "Christopher Bean" and "Tugboat Annie."

Many of you may have seen "Tugboat Annie" and laughed at Dressler's antics as Annie Brennon, the captain of the Narcissus. However, the reality of Dressler's life was far from a laughing matter as Mayer's biographer reveals:

Mayer's fondness for Marie Dressler continued during that exhausting spring. She was on her way to shooting "Tugboat Annie" in Seattle...when she spotted from the window of her chauffeur-driven limousine a small, pretty cottage, saying to Howard Strickling who accompanied her that she would like to own it. Mayer immediately offered its owners twice as much as it was worth to vacate, and they did so: he had it moved to Santa Barbara for her to live in. He knew that she had only a short time to live; her suffering from cancer was agonizing for him, and he wanted her to be as happy as possible. She gave one of her finest performances in the picture [Tugboat Annie], which became one of M.G.M.'s greatest successes to date.

Yes, Dressler finally reached stardom! As Min in "Min and Bill" she portrays a very timely role of a boarding house keeper who sacrifices her scant savings to send the girl she is raising to a private school in the hope that the youngster will have a better life. When the young woman marries someone of wealth and status, Min deprives herself of the opportunity to enjoy the girl's wedding. It is with the solemn face of a loving parent watching from the crowd that Dressler, as Min, walks into lasting fame of the movie world. This was the Great Depression, and Dressler represented all the parents who were sacrificing so that their sons and daughters would have a better tomorrow.

Although Dressler died on July 28, 1934, her image lives on in her many films. This year [1997] two biographies are to be published. Dressler fans can even hope that a movie of her life might follow. But who would play the lead? As Frank Capra, one very successful Hollywood director, perceptively comments, "There is only one Marie Dressler."