

Honoring the First Generation of L.M. Montgomery Preservationists

By Mary Beth Cavert

With Carolyn Strom Collins

For the L.M. Montgomery Literary Society at the
The Eighth International L.M. Montgomery Conference
Celebration of Imagination and Creativity in Honor of the 100th Anniversary of
L.M. Montgomery's Anne of Green Gables

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Hosted at the Delta Prince Edward Hotel, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island

On behalf of the L.M. Montgomery Literary Society and the University of Prince Edward Island L.M. Montgomery Institute, we welcome some special guests [seated here] to the conference opening this morning. They represent the First Generation of L.M. Montgomery Preservationists, whom we want to acknowledge in this centennial year. It would take at least a couple of hours to do justice to the friends we want to celebrate, but that is not possible, so we will have to keep our comments brief now. To make up for it, we hope you will be able to enjoy their company and conversation after this program.

Thank you, honorees and family representatives for coming today. We are honored to have you here. Let us become re-acquainted with these Friends of the Author:



Red haired **Leta** (McCoubrey) **Andrew** was baptized by Lucy Maud Montgomery's husband, Rev. Ewen Macdonald, and saw the author when she worshipped in the Cavendish church. When Leta was a child walking to school, tourists would stop and ask her where to find Montgomery's home. The Cavendish of her childhood was open and beautiful and when she grew up she preserved Montgomery's presence in her beloved home of Cavendish in several ways.

Leta Andrew is acknowledged as a "pioneer" in the Island tourist industry (beginning in the 1940s). She bought and operated the Shining Waters Lodge (the "Rachael Lynde House" on the Cavendish Beach Road) to accommodate the growing numbers of people wanting to be close to the author of *Anne of Green Gables*. Leta led the campaign to place the memorial arch that says *Resting Place of L.M. Montgomery* in the Cavendish cemetery and placed signs to help tourists locate the author's grave. Leta was responsible for the memorial window in the Cavendish United Church, marking Montgomery's 100th birthday and initiated the L. M. Montgomery Ecumenical Memorial Service at the Cavendish United Church in Montgomery's honor. She established the tourist association's Creative writing award to honor new writers which was then called *Adventure in Avonlea*. Leta received many awards for her hard work and volunteerism and she was named woman of the year for PEI by the Women's Institute in 1984. She was a great friend to many tourists who returned year after year and sent her cards and letters from all over the world

Father Francis Bolger, who has been named to the Order of Canada, is the popular professor and author whose expertise on the history of PEI fostered his deep appreciation of L.M. Montgomery -- he helped to change the course of Montgomery studies with his scholarship. Dr. Bolger guided Montgomery's letters to her friend, Penzie Macneill, into the University of Prince Edward Island library and used them for his trailblazing book, *The Years Before Anne*. As Chair of L.M. Montgomery Foundation Board and the Lucy Maud Montgomery Birthplace Trust, and the PEI representative on Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, he has taken an active hand in preserving the Montgomery world for others. Father Bolger took part in the organization of L.M. Montgomery Institute and was the chair of the first conference. He has spoken about Montgomery's life at almost every event in recent memory!



James and Ruth Campbell kept Montgomery's second home at Campbell farm in Park Corner in family hands, preserving the Campbell landscape for present generations. We are grateful that Jim Campbell's vision, great respect for Montgomery, and pride in his home resulted in the foresight to preserve family papers and memorabilia for a museum that draws people from around the world.



Mrs Ruth Campbell



Ruth Campbell, a creative, kind and hard-working teacher, was raised in the Montgomery family of Malpeque, bringing to her marriage with James further connections with L.M. Montgomery. Her

grandmother was Maud's Aunt Emily and Ruth was the last of her family to live at Fox Point in Malpeque (*New Moon* in the *Emily* books). She married Jim Campbell a few months after Montgomery's death. Jim was trained as banker, and had the skills to be a politician or writer, but was persuaded to run the farm.

Before Jim's unexpected death in 1969, he and Ruth wished to open their home open to visitors who wanted to know more about Montgomery, which they did. Ruth got up at dawn to clean, fill lamps, bring in wood, feed pets and bring in flowers to get ready. The house is filled with Montgomery and Macneill personal belongings and keepsakes (from Jim's mother, Ella, or "Cammie"), such as quilts, the bookcase, books, Maud's lap desk (a gift from Stella Campbell), letters, scrapbooks, Aunt Emily's dishes, and the parlor organ, which was played at Montgomery's wedding at the house in 1911.

Today, Ruth and her family keep the home open and provide a venue for unique Montgomery history recorded in their own publication, *Kindred Spirits Magazine*.



Maud, Amy and Georgie Campbell grew up with their brother Jim on the Campbell farm known as *Silver Bush*, as it was named in Montgomery's *Pat* books. They have charmed tourists and readers of *Kindred Spirits* for years with their family stories and have been primary sources for Montgomery research.

For example, Amy, the second oldest of George and Ella Campbell's children (she died Sept 11, 2001), was a valuable resource for Montgomery

scholars because she was the only person who remembered Montgomery's Uncle John and Aunt Annie and cousins, Stella and Frederica Campbell. Amy was revered as a walking encyclopedia of family lore. As a child she got into a lot of trouble with LMM's son, Chester Macdonald, and was also assigned to go with Aunt Maud to the beach to hold a parasol for sunshade while the author wrote. Grandfather Campbell (Maud's Uncle John) was Amy's anchor, especially when she was being reprimanded by her mother, Ella (she would hide behind him so John would say some words on her behalf). Amy was 16 before she realized that Maud was her cousin and not her aunt. She didn't realize then that "Aunt Maud" was famous and she probably never realized that she and her sisters, that Merry Trio of Aunts, became famous too.



Wilda and Harold Clark "Tenacious Wilda Clark lobbied the Ontario government in the early 1960's like a terrier, pointing out to a series of government bureaucrats that Maud lived almost half of her life in Ontario and that the bulk of her 22 books were written in that province. Eleven of the books were written during the 15 years that Maud lived in the Presbyterian manse at Leaskdale. Thanks to Wilda, there has been a historical marker on Highway 12 ever since the middle of 1965. The marker points the way to Leaskdale where there is a larger historical plaque standing outside the former manse. Wilda was also responsible for the Town of Uxbridge buying the manse in 1993 for the purposes of a museum honouring L.M. Montgomery. Soon after that, the federal government recognized the manse as a heritage site." (by Jack Hutton)

Harold and Wilda Clark lived in the Uxbridge and Leaskdale area for over 80 years. Harold's family farm was between the two towns and he went to the country school with Montgomery's sons. Wilda never met the Macdonald family, but as a teacher in the 1930s, she read *Anne of Green Gables* to her students and loved the author and her work. Wilda always opened her home to visitors and shared her collection of Montgomery keepsakes. Visitors could expect a one or two day excursion to visit Montgomery sites. She also kept flowers at the grave of Montgomery's infant son, Hugh.

For a decade, she worked tirelessly to make L.M. Montgomery's Leaskdale home an historic site, and she succeeded.



Mollie Gillen, is an award winning author and inductee into the Order of Australia. For you book collectors, Mollie's birthday, in terms of *Anne of Green Gables* editions, is 1st edition, 6th impression (that is, November 1908). We wish her well in her own centenary.

(from Yuka Kajihara) Mollie first came to Canada in the 1940s as a war bride, and in the 1950s she began writing articles for Canadian magazine *Chatelaine* where she later became an associate editor and staff writer. In 1973 Mollie was given an assignment to write an article about Montgomery for the centennial celebration of her birth. Mollie says that "If [I hadn't been asked] to write about Maud, I wouldn't have had a chance to read her books nor write about her at all,"

This assignment led Mollie to serious research on Montgomery, reading all of her published works and interviewing many of her friends and relatives who were alive at the time and then locating the letters written by Montgomery to one of her long-term correspondents – G.B. MacMillan in Scotland. The existence of these letters was unknown at the time. She enlarged her research into book form and published the Montgomery biography, *The Wheel of Things*. Mollie is most proud that she was able to discover the letters, saving these literary treasures from destruction, and placing them in the National Archives of Canada. The positive response of her readers continues to fill her with amazement and joy.



Ruth Macdonald's unflinching generosity with family materials and active encouragement of Montgomery studies has been instrumental from the beginning, in supporting Montgomery scholarship and research. She has always been a most generous interviewee about her husband, Dr. Stuart Macdonald, sharing his lifetime of stories about his mother and the life of the mind and spirit she encouraged.

She was the first Montgomery family member to be contacted about starting the L.M. Montgomery Institute - and the first to say she was coming to the launch party for it. She has been delighted to support her children and nephew's family in making key, invaluable donations to the Institute, including the family Bible with Montgomery annotations, and Chester's numerous signed first editions. She personally donated Montgomery's Japanese kimono.

Ruth's quiet, indomitable, magnanimous presence can be felt in almost every successful collaboration: between the heirs and scholars, the heirs and governments, the heirs and creative artists. The sweet smile on her face in her wedding photograph with Stuart Macdonald is the very same today in its warmth and radiant kindness. Ruth Macdonald, in other words, has through force of character and strength of spirit urged the best wherever she has been involved on the family's behalf. (contributed by Betsy Epperly)

John and Jennie Macneill



John Macneill has preserved the farm and land owned by his ancestors and L.M. Montgomery's maternal family. Jennie Macneill, a former teacher who is still teaching us about L.M. Montgomery wrote: "I sit at [my] kitchen window and look out over the hill fields of [my] farmstead – the very fields which the author looked out on for over half of her life."

With their own hands, the Macneills lifted fallen stones back into place in the old cellar of the home where L.M. Montgomery wrote *Anne of Green Gables*. They dug out the original well and built a well-stocked bookstore (complete with Macneill artifacts) on the site of the old barn. In it we can see the post office desk and stamp, mantle and clock, and sewing machine. They began to tell people the author's story in her own home landscape. Jennie has written many articles about Cavendish for *Kindred Spirits Magazine*, been a member of the Avonlea (Cavendish) Women's Institute (est. 1920), and been a most popular speaker for any Island Lecture Series. As chair of L.M. Montgomery Heritage Society, she initiated the first celebration of Montgomery's birthday in November 1995. The Site of L.M. Montgomery's Cavendish Home, re-crafted by the Macneill's own hands as a labor of love, is now designated as a National Heritage Site.

Heath and Mary Ella Montgomery



Following in the tradition of Heath and Maud's grandfather Montgomery, also known as "The Senator," the Montgomerys have maintained the legendary hospitality they were always known for, opening their home in Park Corner to many visitors through the years. James Townsend and Eliza Montgomery took over the home and farm after the Senator died and kept the furnishings, including many items Maud wrote about in her books, such as the Rosebud Tea-Set, Magog the china dog, the china fruit basket, and the Townsend clock, with the house. The house is considered a model for "Ingleside" in the Anne books.

In 1993, Heath and Mary Ella's son Robert and his family opened the house as the L. M. Montgomery Heritage Museum. Currently, about seventy pieces from the Montgomery collection of memorabilia have been sent to Japan and form the nucleus of their display

celebrating the 100th Anniversary of Anne of Green Gables. Since the exhibition began a few weeks ago, thousands of people have come to view the artifacts made famous in Maud's books.

Heath was Maud's first cousin, son of Hugh John Montgomery's brother James. He served in World War I in France, returning to the farm in Park Corner after the war ended. He and Mary Ella had five children, some of whom remember Maud visiting the home when she came out to Park Corner. Heath had one of the few automobiles in the area at the time and "motored" her around the Island to see friends. George Campbell remembers Mary Ella's telling many wonderful stories about Montgomery and his family's ancestors. He remembers what a great cook she was and how hard she worked. "She was a strong and kind-hearted woman. She had a keen business sense and it seemed nothing slowed her down."



Elizabeth Waterston is the ebullient and energizing force behind balanced Montgomery scholarship. A distinguished scholar and expert in Scottish-Canadian literature, she collaborated with colleague, Mary Rubio, to co-edit *The Selected Journals of LM Montgomery* and create the *Canadian Children's Literature Journal*. Waterston's chapter on L.M. Montgomery for the book, *Clear Spirit: Twenty Canadian Women and Their Times*, in 1967 was "foundational" and started the Montgomery ball rolling in academic circles. At the time, it was unusual to write about female writers, or rural writers, or children's literature, or anything aimed at popular audience. So, of course Elizabeth did it.

Mary Rubio: "She was the first person anyplace in the world to do a serious academic analysis of Montgomery's writing." For that work, Elizabeth interviewed Stuart Macdonald who told her about his mother's journals. Elizabeth shared that good news with Mary Rubio, who followed up years later when Stuart was ready to pass them on. The rest is history and biography.



The Webb Family

Anita Maud (called Nan or Aunt Nete), Marion, Pauline (Polly), Lorraine, and Keith Webb have been a part of the Montgomery legacy for most of the century. They lived in and loved her very own beloved places and when they grew up, they were companions for Maud.

The children of Myrtle and Ernest Webb could be considered the luckiest kids in the world (from the viewpoint of this audience celebrating the centennial of *Anne of Green Gables* on this

exquisite Island). They were the last family to grow up on the place and land now known as Green Gables. And they were part of an intimate audience who got to listen to L.M. Montgomery tell stories in their own home and on the Cavendish beach. They were, as Montgomery said, her “own kin.”

From this family we have enlightening stories of Montgomery (Aunt Maud) and her boys, as well as the Cavendish community. They have continued the family tradition of hospitality in Norval, Ontario, and shared Montgomery’s recipes with us. They donated family heirlooms from Montgomery to be shared with her fans: her table cloth, the knitted apple-leaf pattern bedspread she made, and a twenty-two volume set of her novels, including a number of first editions inscribed and annotated by the author.

Myrtle Macneill Webb and her daughters invited tourists into their house for tea, at the “Green Gables Tea Room” -- a practice which ultimately resulted in an expansive National Park and international destination spot. The Webb family preserved their home in its transition from a place of fiction to a national treasure.

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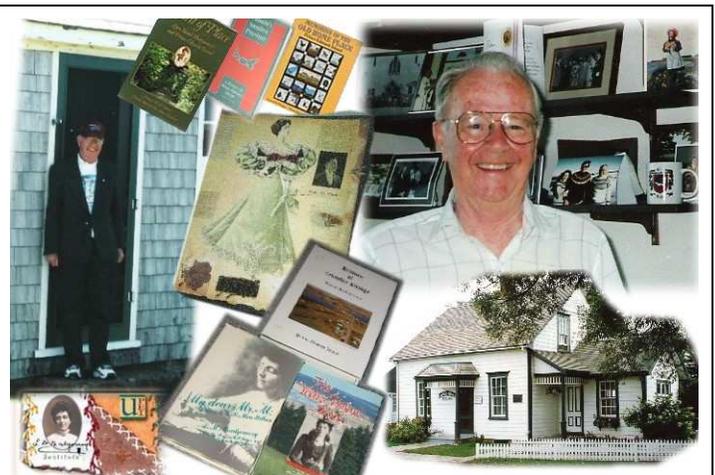
To all the honorees mentioned here today, we want you to know that our experience of L.M. Montgomery would not be the same without you.

To these Friends of the Author, we say a kindred spirited thank you and offer a short video presentation in your honor. It is dedicated to you. ---

[Viewing of the *Anne Tribute video: To the First Generation of L.M. Montgomery Preservationists*]



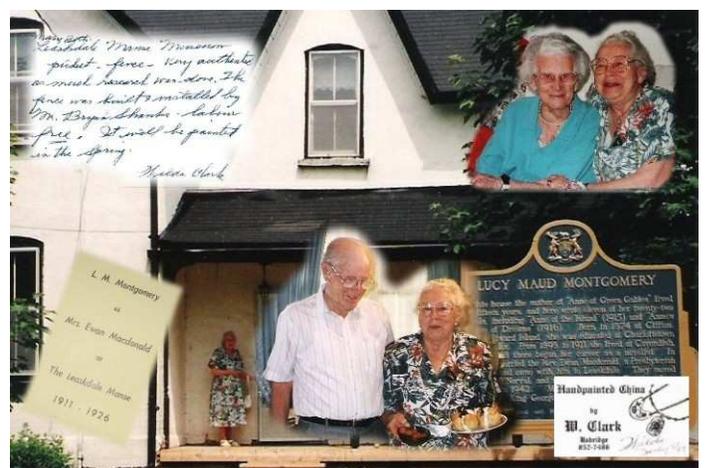
*Leta Andrew*



*Father Bolger*



*James and Ruth Campbell, Maud, Amy, Georgie Campbell*



*Harold and Wilda Clark*

GEORGE BOYD MACMILLAN AND THE RESCUE OF THE MONTGOMERY-MACMILLAN LETTERS

I was just in time. It was a matter of luck, or (I like to think) enterprise that I was able to save from destruction the important collection of letters written by L.M. Montgomery to her Scottish penfriend over a span of 40 years. "I was planning to burn them," wrote the nephew of George Boyd MacMillan, who had inherited them from his uncle. "They had cluttered up my spare room long enough."

To write a biography it is necessary to find out as much as possible about your subject. In the early 1970s interest in L.M. Montgomery's writings was increasing, so that I was sure that there was little more of importance to be found. After all, Maud's penfriend had a distinctive name, George Boyd MacMillan, distinctive location in Alloa, Scotland, and a distinctive occupation, journalist. Someone must have already tried to find any papers that might have survived.

But miracles do happen. In mid-1973 I wrote to the Chief Librarian of the County of Clackmannanshire with questions MacMillan married? Were there surviving descendants? What known of George Boyd MacMillan in Alloa? The Chief Librarian kindly made inquiries and sent a photocopy of newspaper reports at the time of MacMillan's death in 1951. No, he had not married; his papers, if any, would be held by his nephew George McMillan, who, also unmarried, was living on a small army disability pension with a sister, also unmarried. He promised further inquiries, and in March 1974 sent me the nephew's address.

I am glad and proud to have saved Maud's letters for Canada, and am only sorry that other comments did not allow me to publish them myself.

--Mollie Gillen

*Mollie Gillen*



*Jennie and John Macneill*



*Ruth Macdonald*



*Heath and Mary Ella Montgomery*



*Elizabeth Waterston*



*The Webb Family*

### Sources and Contributors

Mary Beth Cavert

Carolyn Strom Collins

Elizabeth Epperly

*Kindred Spirits Magazine* : George Campbell, Sandra Wagner, Louise Polland, Glenna Russell, Carl MacLeod, George Doughart, Anna Macdonald, Jack Hutton

*The Shining Scroll: the Newsletter of the LM Montgomery Literary Society*

Kevin McCabe in *The Lucy Maud Montgomery Album*

Yuka Kajihara and Jason Nolan

Photographs from: Mary Beth Cavert, Carolyn Collins, George Campbell, Robert Montgomery, Louise Lowther, Elaine Crawford, Nellie Ingleman, L.M. Montgomery Archival Collections at Guelph University, L.M. Montgomery Institute at University of Prince Edward Island, Ben Lefebvre, Jason Nolan, Jack Hutton, Don Sucha

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