

# Kindred Spirits

September 2006

**D**ear Kindred Spirits,

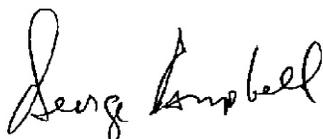
As September sweeps across the Island, the colorful leaves of autumn touch our rolling landscapes. What a beautiful time to visit Prince Edward Island.

Shops in the Cavendish areas are dusting off their shelves for their annual fall sales in preparation for the closing of their season.

Many other business across the Island are awaiting the plentiful motor coaches and cruise ships which arrive in September and October to visit the many historic sites, shopping experiences and to enjoy a feast of lobster.

Our farmers are also making preparation for the fall harvesting. Famous for our Prince Edward Island Potatoes, we are all anxious for our first helping of, fresh from the potato field!

If you have been able to visit Prince Edward Island, we look forward to hearing about the highlights of your visit.



George Campbell, Managing Editor

*"'Excelsior' shall ever be our motto. We trust that each succeeding issue will be better than the one that went before. We are well aware of many defects, but it is easier to see them than to remedy them. Any suggestions that would tend to the improvement of Our Publication will be thankfully received, but we trust that no criticism will be made that will hurt anyone's feelings. Let us all work together in harmony and strive to make Our Publication an influence for good and a source of innocent pleasure..."*

*~ The Golden Road ~*



Joyce Barbour looks over the wide variety of cards and letter she received over 60 years ago, while recovering from surgery. House renovations uncovered the cards, which appear to be no worse for wear.

As Jean Bulger pulled off pieces of wall in the Cascumpec house she was renovating a few years ago, she was surprised when several dusty chocolate boxes came

tumbling out.

Mice had chewed some corners on the boxes, but Bulger was amazed at the condition of the cards inside, which had clearly been there for quite some time.

On scanning the literature, she was touched by the concern shown by those who had written to this young girl.

"I have to find either the person that they belong to or some of her family," she thought.

Bulger waited until recently in case something else turned up in the house.

She was thrilled to find Joyce Barbour was so happy to have them. Barbour, who now lives in Charlottetown, recently got together a handful of the letter writers at her cottage in Cascumpec – minutes away from her old home – to read them.

"We laughed and we cried," she says, explaining some notes came from friends and family no longer with them.

Barbour would like to see some of them go into a museum. But not all.

"Some of them I probably will never part with."

ERIC MCCARTHY/THE JOURNAL-PIONEER, Summerside, PE



**Seven year old's, Quinn and Gary, enjoy an apple picking adventure this fall.**



## Today's Weather

September 30, 2006

|      |         |       |
|------|---------|-------|
| Temp | 17°C    | 63F   |
| Wind | 15km/hr | 9 mph |

Mostly sunny today and tomorrow. Scattered cloud cover with showers on Sunday. Heavy rainfall and strong wind moving in Sunday night and through out the day on Monday. Up to 50mm (3 inches) of rain. Clearing on Tuesday.

# LM Montgomery - Devotions and Duties in Norval

She was cheerful, forward-thinking, and devoted to duties at home, in the community, and in the two-point charge of Norval and Union Presbyterian Churches where her husband was minister. Humour was always ready to rise to the surface, and she lived for moments when her heart and soul were filled with a special touch of spirit. And her immense talent and concern for doing what was right gained Lucy Maud Montgomery Macdonald respect in her community and far-reaching literary circles.

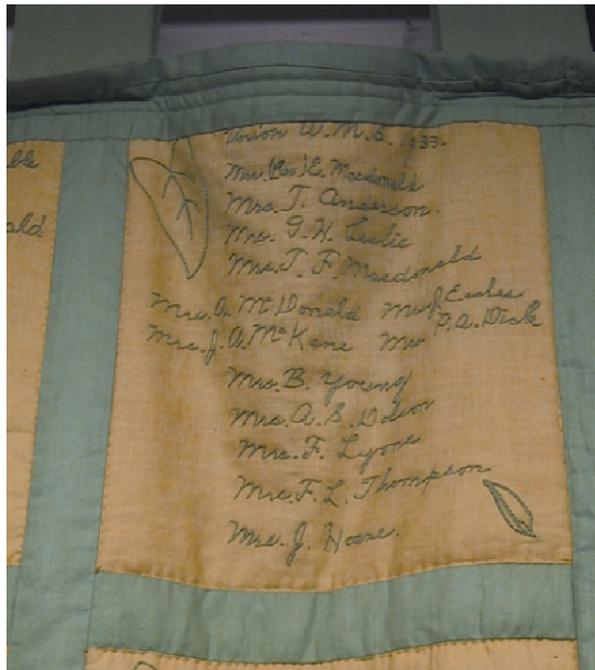
“Maud was an unbelievably busy lady. As a minister’s wife she would be expected to teach Sunday School, attend Services, attend the Ladies’ Meetings, bake for fundraising, and this was for two Churches. She also had two sons to raise. Her husband was not always well, and she had to help him at times,” said Norval resident Joan Browne Carter.

Maud was instrumental in many societies and groups in Norval. Not only was she churning out novels, articles, short stories, and poems, she was a vital part of the religious and artistic life around her.

The Women’s Missionary Society, or WMS, at Norval and Union Presbyterian Churches was organized circa 1891. The WMS sewed quilts, made substantial contributions to the missionary funds of their congregation, and organized clothing bales to be sent to western Canada during the years of drought and depression. Each summer they held a fundraising picnic and entertainment program that over 100 people attended, or an occasional concert to raise funds, during which Maud did her part by giving much-desired readings from her books or poetry. Monthly meetings were held in member’s homes, wherein they had a short program of

entertainment. Maud respectfully took her turns playing hostess throughout the years by entertaining the ladies at 402 Draper Street’s red brick manse. She was elected President in December 1926, and by 1932 was made honorary president.

Halton Hills resident Margaret McKane was a young girl at Sunday School when she knew Maud. “She was not a celebrity to us, she was a minister’s wife,” she noted. “My mother was in the WMS. They had meetings once a month and Maud just loved those meetings. She was in and out of our homes, and everybody loved her. If we needed somebody for a talk or a reading, she’d do it.”



The Macdonalds had hardly arrived in Norval when Maud found herself in the Social Guild at church and on concert committees. At the churches’ fowl suppers in the autumn Maud was often a featured reader, and Ewan acted as chairman. Maud not only recited, but helped prepare the food and washed dishes in the kitchen afterward.

The church women often gathered in homes or church basements to piece quilts, especially embroidered “autograph” quilts, a popular trend in

the 1930s that raised money for worthy causes. It cost 25¢ to have a name embroidered onto the cotton square. In April of 1933 Maud spent some time with Union women piecing together an autograph spread, embroidering names on the cream-coloured fabric, and taking tea with a good selection of gossip. She probably used the concept in her novel “Pat of Silver Bush”, which was released in September 1933.

The minister and his wife were required to visit members of the congregation when they were ill, needed counselling, or simply to enjoy refreshments with a family. Maud often strolled around the village to homes, or she and Ewan drove to visit distant parishioners.

“Mrs Graydon Chester tells of the time Graydon was confined to bed with a severe injury. A binder had fallen on him. Mrs. Macdonald traded mystery stories with him. She enjoyed a good mystery herself,” Norval resident Mary Maxwell said.

As well as teaching Sunday School, Maud was involved with the yearly Christmas concert at Norval Presbyterian, helping to train the children in their parts.

“I had Mrs. Macdonald as a Sunday School teacher a couple of times. Everybody respected her and thought she was a real nice person,” noted Rockwood resident Vivian Crichton. “She gave me a recitation that everyone laughed at, but I didn’t understand. I was born in 1918, so I was maybe eight to ten years old at the time. I was plenty scared and I hated it! “Mrs Macdonald did the Christmas concerts at Norval. She carried the load and was bright and quick. My mother and Mrs Macdonald got along quite well. Mother had the utmost respect for her.”

The Norval Women’s Institute, or WI, currently celebrating its 100th anniversary, is a group for which the

original focus of domestic science education expanded to include personal growth opportunities, government lobbying, and health and community wellness initiatives. When Maud moved to town she joined the Norval WI, attended meetings, and did her share of work, especially performing her own compositions.



Maud took turns holding meetings in the manse and became a director of the branch. Throughout her Norval years she proved to be a popular speaker. As her notoriety spread, she contributed to programs at other Presbyterian churches or WI meetings, no doubt signing a lot of autographs along the way.

Maud was even listed as a member of the executive committee for the Georgetown and Esquesing Humane Society. The executive ensured that Maud's pen name was in their annual reports, using her notoriety as a draw for increased animal rights awareness. In October 1926 Ewan and Maud resurrected the Young People's Guild for Norval and Union Churches, which boasted a high population of youth. From within the membership she organized the Union Dramatic Club, and selected and directed plays that were performed at various venues. The group prospered financially and was able to provide Union Church with such niceties as electric fixtures (the church connected to hydro in 1927), a piano, and in 1933, recovered pew cushions in the sanctuary. Even when they were not practicing a play, the guild held weekly meetings with opportunities for learning and performance. On occasion they held spelling bees – and Maud was often the winner.

Performing in plays or public speaking was an enjoyable outlet for many of the farm youth who were

busy on the land and couldn't attend school. Maud helped to foster that involvement and allowed for creative expression in everyone.

"I can remember Dad talking about LM, as he called her, but it meant little to us at the time, other than that she was a 'famous' writer and wrote 'Anne of Green Gables' ". The importance was shown with our family holiday to PEI and our visit to the homestead there. The yearly plays at Christmas were fond memories of my dad's and he held LM in high regard," said Rockwood resident Elaine Williamson, daughter of Union actor Jim McKane.

The young people took their shows on the road to venues like Georgetown, Woodbridge, Caledon, or Glen Williams, where the name LM Montgomery listed as director in the advertisements probably helped to draw in greater crowds. Maud knew that advertising was the key to success and always made sure that someone – quite possibly herself – got the information to the local papers. Olde Tyme Nites were a way for the artistically-minded members of the community to put together a variety show. Recitals, musical renditions, skits, and songs were part of the programs developed by an enthusiastic group of local citizens, including Maud. The events were usually held in the deep winter when people most needed a reason to get out.

"She had a wonderful sense of music, and of the theatre, and perhaps never again will a small village be so honoured as to have someone of her calibre lead the plays, musicals, and the Olde Tyme Concerts," Joan Browne Carter noted. Maud loved to find herself centre-stage and

worked hard to provide recitals or skits that engaged her audience. The first Olde Tyme concert took place on January 10, 1927, in which everyone wore costumes featuring the bustles, bonnets, tails and top hats of the previous century. After the Great War fashions had altered considerably, from floor-length gowns to above-the-knee frocks for women, and high-lapelled suits with bow ties to looser suits and neckties for men. Occasionally Maud enticed her husband, Ewan, and her house help, Mrs. Mason, to take part in humorous dialogues.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of putting together Olde Tyme Nites was that they usually ran concurrently with play productions, as well as other church functions and speaking engagements. If it wasn't for her maid to take over the smooth running of the household, Maud would have been swept off her feet running from one event to the next. But her keen sense of devotion and respect for duties of the church and community kept her going, and Norval area residents are pleased that not only was LM Montgomery a part of their lives, but she forged a part of their lifestyle.

Taken from L.M. Montgomery  
The Norval Years, 1926-1935  
by Deborah Quaile.  
~ Available through Kindred Spirits

## Looking Back....

What a difference the reading of a book can make! John and I read the newly published Volume I of Lucy Maud Montgomery's Journal twenty-one years ago. That Journal gave us a new purpose and direction for our lives.

We always knew that LM Montgomery's maternal grandparents, Alexander and Lucy Macneill were John's great-grandparents and that we lived on their land passed down through the generations to John. We knew that the author was raised by her Macneill grandparents. We knew John's father was her first cousin. We had a beautiful old picture of the Macneill homestead itself taken about 1900.

What we didn't know, until we read the Journal, was how much she loved her grandparents's home - nor did we know that she called it her "hallowed ground".

Twenty-one years ago there were no buildings left. This spot was a crumbled, tangled, overgrown woods area. Thus began three years of very hard work, as we decided we should do something to show this "hallowed ground" to visitors. We began by clearing the woods, digging out the cellar where the old farmhouse sat, the well she drew the water from and the old lanes she walked. (The homestead fields were still there surrounding it all.) We restored the grounds about it, planted gardens, and fenced it all about with 'longer fences' like the ones in the old photo. Three years later we opened the area to visitors and for the last eighteen



years have tended it carefully and lovingly and have told the history of the author's life lived here to these visitors.

We determined, before we began this project, that we must keep the heritage of the land which was passed down since 1790 from John's great-great-grandfather Macneill, and that we must not commercialize it. We do have a Bookstore - Museum on the Site, where we sell LM Montgomery's books and Island books, as well as postcards, etc.

People from all walks of life and from many countries of the world who love LM Montgomery's writing, visit our Site to see where this famous author lived and where Anne of

Green Gables was written. One very special visitor was Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado from Japan.

The remarks and messages written in our Guest Book are our encouragement to continue to maintain our piece of heritage.

As John and I are getting 'older', we are so glad our son David is taking over the management of the Site. We are still active: we tend the grounds and flowers and I am in the Bookstore occasionally.

Over the last twenty-one years I have learned so much about the author. I have read all five volumes of her Selected Journals, biographies written by LM Montgomery scholars, all twenty-one of her novels (over and over), as well as her short stories and poems. I have attended all seven Biannual Conferences sponsored by the L. M. M. Institute established by Dr. Elizabeth Epperly and held at UPEI. I have learned of her 'sense of place' and the great love she had for Prince Edward Island and its people.

But the most wonderful part of all this is living on this land she loved, walking the lanes she walked, and sitting under the old apple tree she sat under, and being proud of our 'labor of love' which has succeeded in preserving the peace and tranquility of her 'hallowed ground'.

~ Jennie Macneill  
Cavendish Homestead  
PE, Canada

