



Marchmont, Annie MacPherson's receiving home, Belleville, circa 1873. (Library and Archives Canada PA-207772)



Art Monk, at age 11, just before coming to Canada, 1923. (Courtesy of Dave Lorente)

alleys and docks were filthy and diseased. In the last quarter of the 1800s, half the children died before their fifth birthday. Outcast and impoverished, these children were branded as "waifs and strays," "guttersnipes" or "street Arabs." The first attempt to help in 1844 was called "The Ragged Schools Movement."

The social reformers of the age felt it a religious calling to rescue these children. Annie MacPherson, founder of the Marchmont Home in Belleville writes: *Boys came to us [in London] for shelter instead of going to empty barrels, railway arches, and stairways. . . But our walls had limits, and our failures in finding employment for many away from their old haunts became a great difficulty, and the God-opened way of emigration to Canada was pressed upon us.*

MacPherson accompanied her first group to Belleville in 1870. Philanthropist Thomas Barnardo fully embraced child migration in 1881, opening Hazelbrae in Peterborough. Both of these homes were for Protestant children. Catholic children were placed at first through Quebec; in 1904 St. George's Home was established in Ottawa. The Lorentes say "thousands" were sent to the Ottawa Valley primarily through these receiving homes. There were many other agencies in other areas.

Dave and Kay Lorente have no doubt the reformers were sincere. Barnardo described his program as the "Highway of Hope," often describing these children as gifts to Canada, the "flower of the flock."

An associate of MacPherson paints this

pastoral scene: *Miss MacPherson has been able to spend...much of her time visiting among the different farms where our children are located, within some 20 or 40 miles of Belleville in the counties of Hastings and Prince Edward...and oh! the joy of these children to hear the cheery voice of her who had first seen and relieved their misery in the old country.*

However, the picture was not always pretty. In 1869 Maria Rye was the first to establish a home in Canada at Niagara-on-the-Lake. Answering many critics, she admitted the short-comings of some of her methods, writing in 1893: *At the commencement of my work I did indenture the children, but practically it did not work, there was far more danger to the child in being obliged to stay where it had become hateful and was not wanted. At the commencement of this work in 1869 I fondly hoped...all the people who took them would be perfect; experience soon undeceived me.*

Most children in the sending homes were not orphans. Perhaps a parent had died leaving the family destitute. Longing for a better life for their children, a parent might willingly sign over their rights to an agency.

Sometimes a parent would give permission for the child to be sent abroad. But sometimes, it was done without.

Children were often too young to comprehend, at first, the gravity of what was happening to them.



Susan Kelly, at age 6, St. Mary's Orphanage, Walthamstow, England, 1916. (courtesy of Susan and son, Gerard Chaput)

Susan Kelly came through St. George's Home in Ottawa to Calumette Island, near Pembroke, when she was 10. She was "scared" she says to be in a new country. But what she remembers most was the nun who bought all the kids ice cream when the ship docked in Quebec in 1920.

For some it was an adventure, sailing on ships with lofty names like *Empress of Scotland*, *Hesperian*, and *Minnedosa*. Art Monk tells *The Cobden Sun* in 1993: "it

was all a lark. We didn't realize what was happening. I can remember laughing and giggling about it." He was 11-years-old when he came to Marchmont in Belleville in 1923.

Although Art was treated well by the Leech family in Rankin, he always knew he was different. He was alone a lot, he says, with his thoughts. "I would wonder what's happening." Lonely, he would often cry himself to sleep. As an adult he didn't tell his own family he was a Home Child until 1989.