

make follow-up visits after her mother's placement in those homes, never had an opportunity to meet with her alone to hear her story.

"They (the farmer and his wife) would show the inspector a nice well-furnished bedroom in the house as the place where my mother slept. But it wasn't true, my mom said. She was actually made to sleep in what might have been a crawl space furnished only by an old mattress on the floor."

Like many others brought across from England and placed in foster care in Canada's rural farm homes, the second decade of her mother's life consisted of long hours of hard labour, loneliness and bitter tears spilled in secret.

Rita Foster, now in her mid-80s, currently lives in the east end of Belleville. She used to live on Murney Street by the fire hall on Moira Street West and had seen the Marchmont Home

before it was converted to the apartment building that we see today.

"I remember the exterior was yellow in colour. It was a large building with a huge veranda that ran around one side of it," said Foster adding that she saw the structure much after it ceased its operations as a Home, which closed down in 1926.

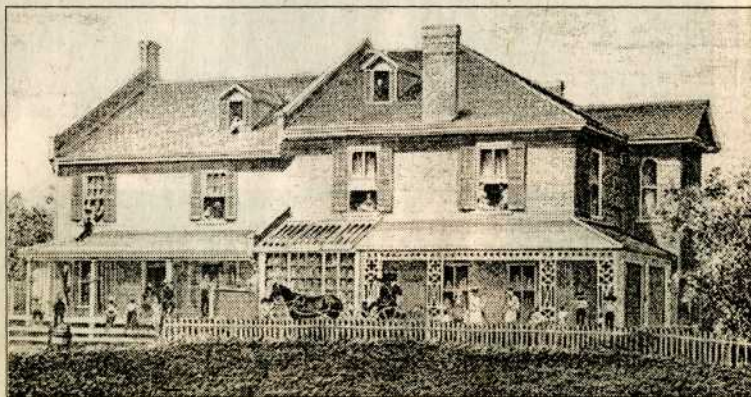
Foster said she, as a former volunteer at the Glanmore Museum, was often invited to the reunions that the museum staff had organized annually for the dwindling number of these once orphans from England still surviving in the area. She thought the last reunion must have been about 15 plus years ago.

"They were about 40 in number then. I thought they looked happy to be there. Some of them would talk about things that happened to them when they first came here. I remember one lady telling us that she was about eight years old then. It was in the wintertime and the woman had her scrubbing the floor. She was awful mean to her. She took her down on the floor and put a knife to her throat. She managed to escape and ran out in her bare feet to the neighbours and they took her back to the Marchmont Home."

Between the period of 1860s to mid-20s over 80,000 orphans from the streets, workhouses and the orphanages in England were sent to Canada in an attempt by well-meaning adults like Annie McPherson and Dr. Barnardo to salvage them from dismal environments and rebuild their lives in this country. While those under the age of six might have been adopted, historical accounts documented that others slogged as farm hands and domestic servants for little or no pay.

Marion (Thornley) Kellar lived with her last assigned family till she married and became a mother and a homemaker to her eight children. She died at the age of 102 on Oct. 8, 1997 surrounded by her large family consisting of her own children, 27 grandchildren and their families.

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The Marchmont Home once located on 193 Moira St. West, Belleville, is now an apartment building. Until 1925, it operated as one of the first homes for the little orphan immigrants from England.

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