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Geraldine Bolton

Memories of county brought her back

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By JIM MONAGHAN
Gazette reporter

As the years went by, the desire to return to her hometown became more compelling. So last January, 91-year-old Geraldine Bolton came back to spend her remaining years in Picton after a 61-year absence.

Music has been Mrs. Bolton's whole life. She gave private piano lessons in Picton, attended the Toronto Conservatory for a year, and belonged to a club in Montreal that booked topnotch musicians there and for Toronto's Massey Hall.

But her interest in music began with her father, Charles Benjamin Allison ("everybody in town called him C.B."), who owned Teasel's Drug Store at the turn of the century.

She vividly remembers how the druggist used to enjoy his lunch hour at home after spending long hours on his feet at the downtown pharmacy. One day, she said, he got a call from his frightened apprentice, who had given a Waupoos man the wrong prescription, a drug that might be fatal.

Her father hurriedly rented a horse from Lawrence Way and road like the wind all the way from Picton to Waupoos, a 10-mile sprint. Arriving just as the man was about to swallow a pill, Mr. Allison leaped off the horse, seized the bottle from the startled customer and threw it to the ground, grinding it into the dust in his excitement.

But what might have been a happy ending was marred by the death of the horse, which collapsed from exhaustion after the killing gait set by Mrs. Bolton's father.

"The owner wasn't pleased about that," she said, "it being a trained animal and all. My father had to pay him \$150."

At the Toronto Conservatory, Mrs. Bolton had a professor, Dr. Anger, who criticized her mercilessly. Finally, she confessed to him that his attentions made her a nervous wreck at recitals. Furthermore, she was going to quit when the ten weeks she had already paid for were over.

It was then that he surprised her. "You might as well stay on," he said. "After all, we just happen to be related through a cousin of mine in Adolphustown."



Full of memories and reminiscences, Geraldine Bolton has fulfilled a dream by returning to Picton.

Mrs. Bolton moved to Montreal in 1919. Her husband, another Picton native, became an assistant administrator at the head office of the Bank of Montreal.

There, she became involved with the Ladies Morning Musical Club. She was picked for the club by playing one of her own compositions. "That way they couldn't tell if I was playing the right notes or not," she laughed.

Selected for the club's executive, she became a protege of Madame Leger whose brother-in-law, Jules, happened to be Canada's Governor-General. "She took a fancy to me and I spent many evenings with her entertaining the musicians."

One of those world-renowned musicians was singer Lauritz Melchior. "I think he was one of the biggest men I ever saw in my life," she said.

But now Mrs. Bolton is back home, living at Picton Manor on Hill Street. "I'm so glad to be back; I just love it here. I think Picton is one of the nicest towns in Ontario, or in all of Canada for that matter."

Exactly the kind of sentiment you'd expect from a devoted hometown girl.

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