

Second Glance

By Viva Richmond Graham

BELLEVILLE'S DEAN OF BUSINESS WOMEN

Intel Oct 29/66
"When you sell a man a book you don't sell just 12 ounces of paper and ink and glue — you sell him a whole new life." — Christopher Morley.

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"As a matter of fact, it was in the fall, 33 years ago when I first came to Belleville to start my book shop," recalls Miss Joy Nichols, speaking of "how and when she began," while on a visit at her apartment, 186 John Street.

"And I was quite properly frightened, too," and her lively blue eyes are wreathed in smiling memory at the thought of it all.

"But why?"

"For one good reason. Thirty-three years ago was right in the middle of the great depression; and money, work and prosperity were scarce, scarce, scarce. Stenographers, sales-girls, teachers were a dime a dozen. Jobs could not be had for love nor money. But, well — I survived.

"I had lived all my life in Cobourg. I was born on a family farm west of there. When my father retired, we moved to town, where he opened up a book-shop which he and mother attended, while I taught school.

"I remember the time my father and I took a boat trip to Quebec City — how leisurely and lovely cruising the Lake and the St. Lawrence was in those days — and upon reaching our destination, the news broke that war was declared. World War I, that was. My mother described later what a frantic time she had, trying to fulfill all customers' demand for papers . . ."

"As for Cobourg, I look back upon it as my birthplace, with wonderful memories. Many summer people from the eastern States came to spend each summer in their palatial homes there.

"Among these, Colonel Cornell and his daughter Lydia decided to make it their permanent home, where their famous relative Katherine came often to visit them.

"Miss Lydia was a most gracious lady and one time (and this happened after I came to Belleville), when a Katherine Cornell picture was to have its premiere in Cobourg, Miss Lydia invited all of Cobourg's teachers as guests to see it; also Katherine, who made a personal appearance.

"As for giving anyone advice upon opening a business, I can't say that I have any to give. One just learns by living and doing.

"I do think, however, that a book store is — all things being equal — an excellent business for a woman to engage in. A woman is usually most sensitive to the likes and dislikes of her buying public, which gives her an insight concerning its tastes which she may help develop.

"I have always tried to stock books of which I am proud, and thus may pass over to the reader with a certain pride — knowing they have a treat in store — a sort of pleasing, happy gift."

To Belleville citizens, Miss Nichols is more than just the proprietress of "The Quinte Book Shop." She gives her clients something more than an impersonal exchange of books, papers and school books. There is a cheery greeting, personal sincere warmth, a kind word, a bright smile, friendly eyes that twinkle with an interest in serving each customer, and one leaves her shop with the firm conviction that Cobourg's loss has indeed been Belleville's gain.

Nichols, Miss Joy

"I well remember Beatrice Lily. She and her sister sang in the Presbyterian Church.

"Marie Dressler was before my time, but the townspeople all loved her . . .

"Now, to get back to Belleville:

"After my parents passed on, I decided to give up teaching, and I drove to Belleville with an uncle to decide whether or not I should open a book store. There was an atmosphere here which appealed to me, and so I made my decision: I would stay. I have never regretted it.

"One thing I enjoy are the children who come into my shop to browse and buy. Many scorn the nursery story, the fairytale, even the comics. Instead they delve deeply into books which, surprisingly, interest them: books about animals, people of other lands, travel, science concerning this fast moving era. Their ages? I have them from 18 months to well up in their teens!

"Through the years, the Ladies' Home Journal and McCall's have been faithful standbys, but it's rather a note of interest to find English Women's magazines are really popular today.

The Intelligencer
Oct 29, 1966