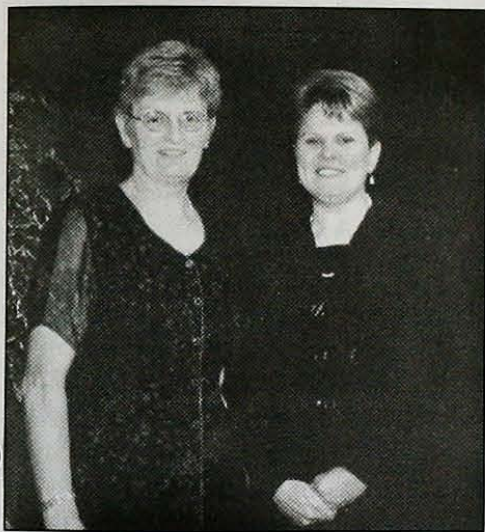


Versions and Realities: Piecing Together the Life of Madge Watt

The theme of your Conference, "Visions and Realities," affords me the opportunity to play with that title as I approach the topic of Mrs. Alfred Watt. When it comes to the indomitable Mrs. Watt, there are many versions of her life, and my task as a historian, is to sift through these "versions" and try to offer you some "realities." Of course, truth is a slippery commodity in these postmodern times. The "truth" about

the life story of Mrs. Alfred Watt is indeed elusive. If you were to start exchanging what you "know" about her with other delegates from different countries, you might be very surprised by what you hear. While there are some essentials that everyone can agree upon - the facts of her birth, death and accomplishments - it is a difficult thing to arrive at one definitive version of her life. Her contributions to the life of the Women's Institutes in Canada and Britain and her role in the Associated Country Women of the World are hard to interpret because national myths about the organizations' great leaders abound.

To some members of the ACWW, Mrs. Watt has been under-represented in the history books, while to others, she has been venerated beyond her due. I do not intend to resolve that debate for you. Indeed, the very fact that such debate takes place at all, is one of the things I find most compelling about her life story. Every account I have read about Mrs. Alfred Watt makes some reference to the fact that in 1913, Madge the young widow with two small sons, picked up and moved from British Columbia to England. That is where the story of



ACWW President Hilda Stewart (left) with Dr. Linda Ambrose.

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her international involvements with organizing rural women begins. But I have always had questions about that set of circumstances, and during the last year of my sabbatical research, I have attempted to piece together some of the contextual evidence about her life before the move to England.

Linda Ambrose
Associate Professor

History Department, Laurentian University

*"It is the greatest of all
mistakes to do nothing
because you can only
do a little.*

Do what you can."

- Sydney Smith (1771-1845)

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So, that's my vision of the rural community.

Rural communities are changing and they're changing dramatically. And it's up to us to help them adapt to this change through your and my voluntary action, through leadership development and through encouraging wise planning while having respect for our rural history and traditions, no matter where you live in this increasingly small world.

Mark Waldron
Professor, Rural Extension Studies
Ontario Agricultural College, University of Guelph

"Visions for Volunteers"

There are several components to remember and practice within the workings of any volunteer-based organization. Each of these four components is important to ACWW, its committees and individual member societies.

The first - preparing for volunteers. That encompasses needs assessment, opportunities available, program planning and knowing the skills and responsibilities needed.

Second - recruiting and selecting volunteers to match tasks.

Third - orientation and ongoing training of volunteers.

Fourth - feedback and evaluation of volunteers and recognition of their contributions.

The phrase "volunteer management cycle" is

often used to describe these four components and help organizations focus on the importance of care and personal development of the individuals who make things happen on behalf of those organizations.

Remember that an organization is made up of people and the people who volunteer have varying interests, motivations and talents. The organization's objectives can only be met if a certain amount of time is spent dealing with the individual needs of each of those volunteers. Following an effective volunteer management cycle will satisfy the needs of those people and help reach the goals of the organization, and successes won't be far behind.

Lorraine Holding, Consulting Services
Former Manager of Volunteer Programs & Partnerships, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs