

BY JEAN TUGWELL

Kathleen Downey Neilson Wemp was born on Amherst Island June 21, 1893, daughter of James and Ida Neilson, wife of Arnold Wemp, who was also born on Amherst Island in 1884.

Kathleen now 100 years old and blessed with a keen memory and sense of humour, enjoys reminiscing of girlhood days in the Village of Stella, where she lived with her parents, two sisters, three brothers and periodically two half sisters and two half brothers. Her father being a merchant, one of the exciting events was the arrival of the lake boats at the dock where their mother often took them to watch the unloading of the freight — barrels of sugar, flour, bolts of cloth, footwear and much more.

Kathleen attended #1 Public School below the village. Music has always been her delight, and twice weekly she travelled to Kingston to take piano and vocal lessons. While awaiting the opening of the first high school on Amherst Island, she visited her half sister Gertrude Thompson in Brooklyn, New York where she continued studying piano and was privileged to attend the premier performance of *The Merry Widow*.

On June 2, 1913 Kathleen and Arnold Wemp were married in St. Alban's Anglican Church, Stella, which was beautifully decorated with white lilacs. A small reception was held at the bride's home. At approximately 8:45 a.m. the bridal party boarded the steamboat *The North King* for Kingston.



Mrs. Kathleen Wemp poses with her five children, Jean Tugwell, Marjorie Tooke, Helen Miller, Ralph Wemp and Neilson Wemp.

(photo by Shirley Miller)

After touring and dining in Kingston, the bride and groom continued to Montreal on *The Alexander*, a side wheeler. Upon their return they lived at the west end of the Island, where Arnold farmed.

Arnold was musically inclined and learned to play the coronet in the Amherst Island Band. Life on the farm was a new experience for Kathleen, and although she never mastered milking cows by hand (always said she couldn't hit the pail), she could

be found early in the morning baking many pies, kneading bread, churning cream to pack butter, or gardening.

Kathleen and Arnold's two sons, Neilson and Ralph, and three daughters Helen, Marjorie and Jean, who are still living, were also born on

Amherst Island. Arnold died after a long struggle with cancer in 1936.

Kathleen and her children are blessed with many happy memories, especially of sing-songs around the piano accompanied by Arnold playing the mandolin. Sunday chores were planned to allow time to hitch the horses to either the sleigh or the two-seated buggies so everyone could attend Christ Church, Emerald.

Kathleen played the organ in Christ Church and also in St. Alban's before, being married and during W.W. II years, when she again resided in her original home in the

village. She was also active in the Anglican Guild, Women's Auxiliary and assisted A.Y.P.A. members in presenting plays.

Kathleen was seriously injured in a car accident in 1946, after which she lived amongst her family. She has been a resident of Lenadco Nursing Home, Napanee, since 1983.

Kathleen has 12 grandchildren living, two deceased, 20 great-grandchildren living, one deceased and seven great-great grandchildren.

(Ed. note: Jean Tugwell is a daughter of Kathleen Wemp and an active member of St. Albans.)

This photograph was taken on the occasion of Mrs. Wemp's 100 birthday celebration at Lenadco residence in Napanee