



From this . . .

Canadian fashions of a century ago, from left, serge tennis suit, imported gingham suit, plaid gingham, gingham suit with plain trimming, ladies' white

suit, ladies' white lawn suit, ladies' fine embroidered suit. Skirt length was about 42 inches. Fashions are displayed in the John Wanamaker catalogue.

1875

1766 **A lively lady** 1850

On Friday afternoon at 3:30 an historical plaque commemorating Elizabeth Posthuma Simcoe, wife of the first Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, will be unveiled at the entrance to Castle Frank High School at Bloor Street East and Castle Frank Road. It is one of a series erected in recent years by the Archives of Ontario, acting on the advice of the Archaeological and Historic Sites Board. Mrs. Simcoe, whose diaries left us some of the liveliest accounts of life in this area at the beginning of its settlement, once had a log summer house overlooking the Don River near the site of the newly erected plaque. She called it Castle Frank, after her son Francis, and evidently relished the visits she was able to make to it during her sojourn here. In April of 1796 she wrote in her diary: "The Porticos here (in Castle Frank) are delightfully pleasant and the room cool from its height and the thickness of the logs of which the House is built . . . we rode there thro those pleasant shady Pine Plains, now covered with Sweet scented Fern—there is no wood under the pines so it is good riding." Although Mrs. Simcoe was a wealthy young English lady of much refinement, her diary indicates that she greatly enjoyed the comparatively rough mode of life she found in the primitive settlement of York, even though the first residence here of Mrs. Simcoe and the Lieutenant-Governor was a tent purchased in England at an auction of the effects of the famed explorer of the Pacific, Captain James Cook. On Toronto Bay, by the light of a great bonfire, she and some other ladies of the community watched the Indians spear fish through the ice while they toasted pieces of venison on sticks.



Elizabeth Simcoe

"The ladies did not catch cold and were delighted with the novelty of dining in the open air in winter," she wrote. "Francis has a small sleigh which the servants have taught a goat to draw. He is the handsomest goat I ever saw and looks very well in the harness. . . ." She did complain mildly about the rigors of the Canadian winter on at least one occasion, however: "The weather extremely cold. Tho' I wore three fur tippets, I was so cold I could hardly hold my cards this evening."

Mrs. Simcoe's peculiar middle name—Posthuma—came from the fact that her father died at Gibraltar a few months before she was born, in 1766, and her mother died within 12 hours of her birth. She was what would now be called a child bride when she married John Graves Simcoe at the age of 16 in 1782.

She accompanied her husband to his new post as Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada in 1791. She brought with her her two youngest children, Sophia and Francis, but left four older children, Eliza, Charlotte, Henrietta and Caroline back in England in the care of friends.

Mrs. Simcoe became a widow at the age of 40 when her husband died on October 26, 1806. Devoting the remainder of her life to charitable works, she lived to the ripe age of 84. Of her sad departure from York on July 21, 1796, she wrote: ". . . took my leave of Mrs. McGill and Miss Crookshanks. I was so much out of spirits I was unable to dine with her, she sent some dinner but I could not eat, cried all that day . . ."

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Paris, November, 1852. 125-ko

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