

Lillian McConaghy nee (Langstaff)

Education in Richmond Hill had its beginnings with James Miles in his Sunday School opened in 1811. His great-niece Mrs. Lillian McConaghy also made a great contribution over a period of more than 40 years to the education of the village's young people. In the late 1950s the burgeoning population of Richmond Hill necessitated the building of additional elementary schools.

The public school on Yonge Street in which Mrs. McConaghy taught for more than a quarter of a century was renamed the M.L. McConaghy School in recognition of those years of service.

Born in 1866

Born at 8 a.m. July 26, 1866, to Dr. and Mrs. James Langstaff in their Yonge Street home, the little daughter was named Mary Lillian.

She attended Miss Christina Campbell's private school, called a Seminary for Young Ladies for a couple of years until it closed in 1875.

She then attended Mrs. O'Brien's private school located on Richmond Street (called Law's Lane at the time) for a year.

She was 10 years old when she transferred to the Richmond Hill Public School.

This school had three teachers at that time.

Early high school

The high school, a red brick building, was also located on the Yonge Street site, in front of and to the north of the public school.

It had two rooms, a principal and an assistant.

The public school principal received an annual salary of about \$450, according to Mrs. McConaghy in The Liberal of July 26, 1956, and the high school assistant the same.

The high school principal was paid a slightly higher amount and the public school assistants a lower sum.

Child prodigy

High school entrance examinations were written twice a year then. Mrs. McConaghy passed these in December 1879 (at the age of 11½).

But since there was no room for her in the high school she had to wait until September 1880 before starting her secondary school studies.

She received her third class certificate in 1884 and then attended Brampton Model School where she earned a teacher's certificate good for four years.

She then attended Brampton High School, receiving her second class certificate and was required to teach three years before attending normal school.



yesterdays

by mary dawson

Log school

Her first job was at Monck, near Arthur, in a log school-house with rough desks made by the men of the community.

It was heated by a large box stove.

Mail came only twice a week. The farmers used oxen and raised sheep.

Thus mutton was a staple of the diet.

The tallow was used to make a plentiful supply of candles. The wool was spun into cloth.

Vellore job

Lillian transferred to the Vellore school at Christmas time.

She then went to normal school, securing her permanent second class teacher's certificate.

Other schools in which she taught were located in Goderich and Parkdale (Toronto).

During her time at the latter school she married Dr. Francis McConaghy, a second year medical student.

In 1893 the young couple went to Midland, a boisterous, brawling town filled with hunters and Indians.

Husband died

Here the young doctor died.

In 1900 Mrs. McConaghy and her five children returned to Richmond Hill.

They took up residence on Centre Street West. She began to teach Grade 1 in the Richmond Hill Public School in 1906 and retired in 1940.

Wartime shortage

But the shortage of teachers caused by World War II resulted in her return to duty.

She taught until 1946 when she retired for the second time, having taught three generations of some families.

Mary Lillian McConaghy passed to her eternal rest Dec. 22, 1969, at the age of 102½ years.

She retained her faculties and a clear memory almost until the end of her long and useful life.



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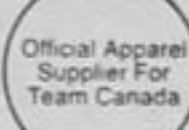


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