

THE BURNS MEMORIAL BURSARY

ELIZABETH (Mrs. R. F.) BURNS



The Presbyterian Message
January 1987

Mrs. Elizabeth (Holden) Burns was the first president of the Society, from 1876 until 1892. She was the wife of the Rev. Dr. R. F. Burns of Fort Massey Presbyterian Church, Halifax. During her many years as President, she traveled about, visiting and helping many auxiliaries throughout the three Maritime Provinces. While living in Halifax, her husband served a term as Moderator of the General Assembly.

Mrs. Burns is described as being a calm and stately lady, energetic and full of zeal and sympathy. Her warm-hearted and genial personality endeared her to many people. Her deep devotion to the cause of mission helped to enrich and extend the work of the Society immeasurably.

Annual Reports from 1909 to 1912 record Mrs. Burns, then living in London England, as the Honorary President of the Society.

When the Golden Jubilee of the W.M.S. (E.D.) was celebrated in 1926, the sum of \$5,000 was set aside as a memorial to Mrs. Burns to be used in the British Guiana field. The income from this money was used to add two native deaconesses to the field there and, in 1938, the principal was given toward the building of Burns Memorial Church in Georgetown, Guiana (*page 36*).

At the 110th Annual Meeting, the Society again honoured Mrs. Burns' memory by giving her name to a bursary, thus commemorating her life and work.

THE JEAN MacGREGOR BURSARY

Jean MacGregor was the longest-serving member on the Executive of the Woman's Missionary Society (Eastern Division) until the time of her death on July 31, 1977.

Jean was born in 1893, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. P. A. MacGregor. Her great grandfather was the Rev. James Drummond MacGregor, pioneer minister and missionary who came to the Pictou area in 1786. Jean grew up in a home where her mother was dedicated to the Missionary effort. Mrs. MacGregor was Presbyterian Mission Band Secretary for a number of years with a goal of 100 groups in Pictou Presbyterial. Although the goal was never quite reached, Jean drove her mother to many of the churches and homes in the County to organize and encourage groups. After Mrs. MacGregor's death, every year Jean gave a Life Membership in her mother's memory.

Jean was a member of Westminster Presbyterian Church in New Glasgow, N.S. and was for many years the president of the congregation's W.M.S. auxiliary.

Jean graduated from Dalhousie University in 1914 and was on the staff of Branksome Hall, a private girls' school in Toronto. During the 1918-19 term, she was a part-time student at Ewart College. Although she was not a graduate of Ewart College and never on the "payroll" of the Church, her contributions as a volunteer were most noteworthy. After 1925, she worked in the Church offices in Toronto without remuneration. The CGIT movement, which she served as National Secretary for some months, owes much to her.

Jean's story in the W.M.S. (E.D.) Board of Management/Executive as Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Auditor and Advisor began in 1924. My lesson in the history of the Society began with Jean telling of the Annual Meeting in Westminster that year. Church Union was in the forefront and those opting for a Continuing Presbyterian Church did NOT vote for the Budget of 1924-25. At an appropriate time, they left the Session and convened in the Church Hall as a "continuing W.M.S." at that time naming Jean MacGregor as Treasurer. At the Annual Meeting of 1925, an "old lady" said, "I was horrified that our finances were in the hands of that young girl until I heard her report". The office of Treasurer practically became a lifetime position for Jean MacGregor.

She was one of the first women to sit on the Administrative Council of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, nominated by the Church.

In her several capacities within the Board/Executive, Jean MacGregor was kind, direct and always on the side of what might be termed "common sense". She was a supporter of new ideas in Mission Education and the first Officer to suggest that the W.M.S. (E.D.) support visits to overseas "fields".

She was a staunch supporter of deaconesses serving in our Synod and Presbyteries and of missionaries overseas. She was the first to agree to financially support Georgine Caldwell (*page 92*) in studies suggested by the Board of Missions of the Church prior to her going to Taiwan as well as Doctoral studies later suggested by the Church in Taiwan.

Well-spoken in financial matters, she influenced policy and support for the Mission Board's recommendations. She wrote several articles on finance and "open letters" in *The Presbyterian Message*. In an interview in 1974, Jean was congratulated for having been named Honorary Treasurer and asked about her best memories of the W.M.S. She responded, "The wonderful friends I've made over the years."

A few months before her death, Jean attended the 101st. Annual Meeting and could recall having missed only one Annual Meeting (in Newfoundland) since she began as treasurer in 1924. An AMS bursary honouring her life and work is given annually to theological students in the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Winnifred Bean

THE ESTELLE MACKENZIE BURSARY

C. ESTELLE V. MacKENZIE

Miss Estelle MacKenzie was born in Gairloch, Pictou County, Nova Scotia. As a young girl, she joined the Mission Band in Millbrook and later became a member of the Woman's Missionary Society (E.D.) through the auxiliary in Elmfield. Estelle graduated from the Presbyterian Missionary and Deaconess Training Home in Toronto in 1922. Returning to Pictou County, she worked in Thorburn for three years. Then, while working in Chalmers Jack Mission in North Sydney, she taught day school as well as doing her church work.

Estelle served under the W.M.S. in River Herbert for six years. After spending two years in Knox Church, Halifax, her work took her to Titusville, N.B., to Whitney Pier, back to Titusville, thence to River Herbert and on to summer work in Cape North, Glace Bay, Birch Grove and Whitney Pier. She then spent four years in Millerton, N.B. and finally at Salt Springs, Kings County, under the St. John Presbytery, retiring in 1953. She received her gold Deaconess pin for twenty-five years of faithful service.

She was a member of St. Andrew's Auxiliary in Pictou. In her honour, in 1991, the auxiliary was re-named as "The Estelle MacKenzie Auxiliary".

Due to failing eyesight and then complete blindness, she moved into the Oddfellow's Home in 1979 where she lived until her death on September 30, 1996 at the age of 103.

Estelle was a very giving person. She regularly tithed to the Church and then gave to others. If someone gave her a gift, she always knew someone who needed it more, and gave it to *them*. She was very interested in anyone who was studying to be a Deaconess or for the ministry and would write letters of encouragement. With the letter, there would be a little money to help them.

Estelle's prayer life was an example to all. She really talked to God and listened to Him too. The focal point of her life was always her church and the service of the Lord. Her loving and tender Christian witness endeared her to all those with whom she came in contact.

An AMS bursary honouring her life and work is presented annually.

Additional information supplied by Jessie Johnson

I was always keenly interested in missionary service. Hearing of our Church's work in Korea and Trinidad, this always challenged and interested me. I was a great reader and it seemed as if I was always receiving Christian literature telling of what the Lord was doing in the world. I did teach in several schools, but when the door opened, I enrolled in the Missionary and Deaconess Training School in Toronto. It was only a two-year course then. And when I graduated in 1922, I had my first appointment here in the Thorburn congregation. Through the years, I served in several of the Presbyteries of the Synod.

From an interview with Rev. Murray Graham *Good News*, Spring 1990

THE SUSAN SYLVESTER BURSARY



Miss Sylvester, deaconess at Stellarton, then told us a little about her work. In the simplest, most interesting way she told us how she taught, mothered and ministered to those foreigners under her care. It is in the home and among the children that her work chiefly lies, but not until a mine explosion brought suffering and bereavement to many of the families did the adults respond. The earnest devotion to duty, the consecrated Christianity of this sweet young woman was a great delight to our W.M.S., making us realize what we are giving to our new Canadians when we send them a deaconess such as this.

Annual Meeting report, *The Presbyterian Message*
October 1922

The Board is happy to announce the appointment of Miss Susan Sylvester as Hospital Visitor in the city of Halifax. This new work is sorely needed and the

W.M.S. (E.D.) is to be congratulated on this forward step.

The Presbyterian Message December 1952

Born in New Glasgow, N.S. in 1887, Susan Sylvester was the oldest child of Walter and Bessie MacDonald Sylvester and was a member of the St. Andrews Kirk. After graduating from the Halifax Conservatory of Music, she taught music in New Glasgow. In 1911 she completed a year of postgraduate work in the Institute of Musical Art in New York.

In 1917, she graduated from the Presbyterian Missionary and Deaconess Training Home and was designated in Joggins, N.S. in the same year. Her first appointment with the church was in Stellarton where she worked among new Canadians. The mine in Stellarton was under Belgian management and they had brought over a number of workers from Belgium and France. The end of World War I also brought an increase in immigration. Since many of these new Canadians spoke French, it was necessary for Miss Sylvester to learn to speak French in order to minister to them.

After seven years in Stellarton, she planned to go to British Guiana as a missionary but her health prevented this. Her next appointments were to Joggins and Thorburn when they had no minister. Then she went to the North end of Halifax and her work there marked the beginning of what is now Knox congregation. After that, she spent eight years at Whitney Pier where she worked with children's and women's groups, did visitation and various other things.

Ill health prevented her from working for the next five years. When she returned to work, she served in several areas including Cape Breton Presbytery, Miramichi Presbytery, Gaspé, Noel Road and Abercrombie.

When the need arose for someone to work among a group of French Catholics in Gaspé who had recently become attached to the Presbyterian Church, Miss Sylvester's ability to

speaking French made her a logical choice. In most of the areas where she worked, she would be in a vacant charge looking after the various needs of the congregation until they got a settled minister.

Before retirement to New Glasgow in 1958, she worked for about five years as Hospital Visitor in Halifax. She passed away suddenly at her home in New Glasgow on February 8, 1968 at the age of 80 – in the early hours of Thursday morning after attending the Wednesday afternoon meeting of St. Andrew's W.M.S. Auxiliary.

Miss Sylvester's dedication to the service of her Lord and the many talents she had to offer made her a very valuable and beloved worker in our church. Like other early deaconesses, she was confronted by a great variety of tasks, including work with women, children and youth, visitation, leading worship services and whatever else the hand found to do. An AMS bursary for theological students, honouring Miss Sylvester's life and work, is presented annually.

Winnifred Bean

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