



British Home Child Group International

Eugenics and Juvenile Emigration – Charlotte Whitton and Dr. Charles Kirk Clarke by Sandra Joyce



Photo Credit Doug Bartlett 1954

“Our full strength and resources are bent to the task of keeping this country strong, virile, healthy, and moral and we insist that the blood that enters its veins must be equally pure and free from taint.” This quote is from one of Canada’s most famous women, Charlotte Elizabeth Whitton who became the first female mayor of a major Canadian city in 1951 and was re-elected by the citizens of Ottawa four more times until she was defeated in 1964. She continued as an alderman until 1972. Whitton was a strong advocate of the equality of women. She also helped to greatly improve conditions for mothers and was very involved in child and social welfare.

Before becoming Mayor, Whitton was secretary of the Canadian Council on Child Welfare and was then promoted to its Executive Director from 1926 to 1941. As well as being a member of the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire, she was also an inexhaustible writer, on subjects including the effects war had on women. She was made delegate of Canada to the Advisory Committee on Social Questions of the League of Nations.

Yet, Whitton also strongly supported the eugenic beliefs sweeping North America like those of Dr. Charles Kirk Clarke, a prominent Canadian psychiatrist, asylum superintendent, educator, and hospital administrator. Clarke believed that European nations were trying to get rid of their insane and genetically defective citizens by sending them to Canada. Whitton agreed with Clarke that morality and criminality were inheritable and this led her to oppose the immigration of undesirables. If these types of immigrants were allowed into the country, they could pose a national menace by producing unhealthy and degenerate offspring.

To Whitton, the only desirable immigrants to Canada were persons of so-called Anglo-Saxon birth who were able to move to

Canada without government assistance. Unwelcome immigrants, she concluded, were those of Oriental, Armenian, Jewish, Central European, or lower-class British heritage. Especially because juvenile immigrants were impoverished, abandoned and required assistance, she deemed all juvenile immigrants to be physically, morally, and socially degenerate.

Whitton’s champion, Dr. Clarke, along with others, founded the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene (CNCMH) in 1919 which was initially meant to provide psychiatric help to returning soldiers. However, the CNCMH turned its interests to screening immigrants who were seen as a source of mentally disturbed persons.

Clarke evoked links of feeble-mindedness to immigration, by using questionable sources released in the United States, much of which was part of the eugenic movement, and Whitton was all too happy to have scientific ‘evidence’ to endorse her ideas of immigration policies.

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Eugenics and Juvenile Emigration – Charlotte Whitton and Dr. Charles Kirk Clarke *continued...*

Clarke also used statistical findings from his Toronto clinic about immigrants, currently seen as debatable and unrepresentative, but at that time, such observations were readily received. The Public Health Journal published his condemnation of the “defective immigrant” in 1916 and in 1918, his theory inking ‘feeble-mindedness and criminality.’ As a result of the efforts of Clarke and the CNCMH, in 1919 Parliament approved amendments to the Immigration Act but Clarke was dissatisfied as the Act relied on civil servants to make admission decisions.

In 1920, after learning that a party of Barnardo children were arriving, the first since the end of the War, Clarke staged a public demonstration to reinforce his preferences and arguments. Spurred on by him, an array of medical experts put them through tests. The children passed with flying colours.

Nevertheless, continual pressure on the government by Clarke and many other psychiatrists reformed the system, which allowed medical inspectors to be posted at the point of embarkation in 1928. As

Clarke died in 1924, he never experienced the realization of this goal. Whitton resigned from the Canadian Council on Child Welfare in 1941 and alongside her stints as Mayor, she advocated for women’s rights in the workplace.



Charles Clarke in 1876 as a Toronto medical student, serving as a Clinical Assistant (extern) at Queen Street from 1874-78 and Assistant Physician, 1878-80. Studio *carte de visite* by Notman & Fraser. CAMH Archives, Clarke Family fonds, 9-19.

Trip to Calgary



Two years ago, Karen Mahoney and I were invited to do some presentations in Calgary. During that trip, I submitted a letter to the Editor of the Calgary Herald about the British Home Children. Nancy Barrett, chair of the Calgary branch of the Canadian Federation of University Women’s speaker’s program, read that letter and as she said, ‘the subject matter resonated with her’. So much so that I was invited to speak to the CFUW at their annual Spring Banquet this year. Prior to leaving for Calgary, full length interviews were arranged with the Calgary Herald and Talk Radio770.

My most gracious host, Nancy, opened her lovely home to me and kindly drove me around to the presentations she had managed to cram into the two days that I was there. A wine and cheese party with the Executive on Sunday night

was followed by an interview with CBC Radio Calgary the next morning. Monday’s presentation at the CFUW was to a capacity crowd of 120 with many guests augmenting the usual 80 members in attendance.

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Children sent to Rhodesia and New Zealand

Between 1946 and 1962, 276 British Child Migrants were sent to Rhodesia through the Fairbridge organization. The Rhodesia Fairbridge Memorial College (RFMC) was set up in a deserted airbase outside Bulawayo. A primary school was run in the empty RAF Operation Rooms and the empty 'barracks' became the dormitories. After the age of 11, the children attended local high schools.

RFMC was very different from the other Fairbridge institutions in that emphasis was put on education instead of unskilled farm work as that was already provided by low paid native workers. The British Home Children sent there were supposed to be equipped with the skills to fill positions of influence later on in life. However, as the country was undergoing major political change – not many experienced success.

Five hundred and forty-nine British Child Migrants were sent to New Zealand between 1949 and 1954. Instead of being institutionalized or sent to individual farms as indentured labourers, the majority of these children were sent to foster homes. The situations were less than ideal as some were not permanent and there was a lack of proper supervision.



Trip to Calgary *continued*



The next evening at the Signal Hill Branch of the Calgary Library, Hazel Perrier and her daughter set up an excellent display including the Alberta quilt that she finished in time for British Home Child Year in 2010. She had copies of all the BHCGI's Newsletters for the audience to peruse.

It was also wonderful to see Bruce Skilling and his partner Inge, Connie Falks and her daughter and Author Brad Barnes there to show their support again. Hazel was invited

to come up and speak about the making of the quilt – an idea that she had originally shared with Gail Collins, who produced the Ontario quilt in 2010. The presentation at the library was full to overflowing and following a lively question and answer period, where people also shared their Home Child stories. Everyone mingled until the library closed up for the evening.



Josie Bell visits Canada by Sandra Joyce



On May 9, Karen Mahoney and I took Josephine Bell and her husband Frank, to see the BHCGI Community Exhibits Display at Queen's Park. Josie is the genealogist extraordinaire from Quarrier's in Scotland – one of the British Home Child sending agencies. We had a great chat about Josie's 12 years at Quarrier's and she said that when she tried to hand in her resignation once, they threatened to lock her in a closet under the stairs (like Harry Potter).

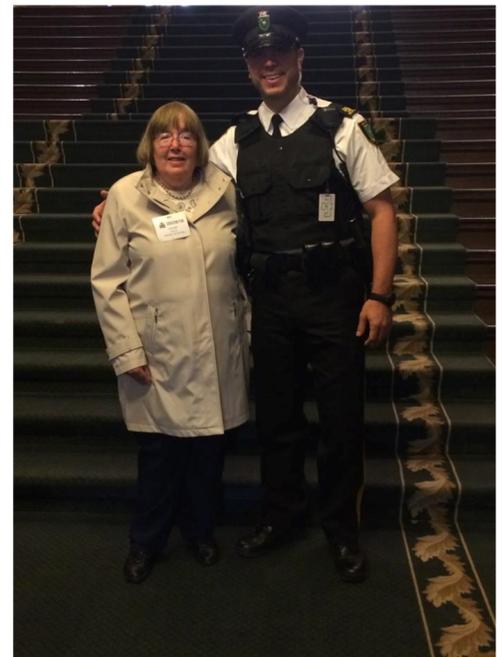
She has helped a lot of descendants find out about their British Home Child ancestors and reunite so many families, like mine who were separated for 90 years. She helped my sister and I find our first cousins – with whom we now have a great connection.

Sadly, they had booked little time in Toronto but after taking them to Union Station, they had already planned to go to Kingston and then Brockville before travelling further east. So happy for Josie and Frank that Beth Bruder and family met up with them for dinner in Kingston. And thanks to Judy Neville who picked them up in Kingston and drove them to Athens to see the cemetery and monument there and then on to Brockville to see the Fairknowe Home. Some descendants were able to meet for lunch.

A note from Josie Bell:

"It's a small world. The taxi driver taking us to Kingston railway station asked us where we were from. When we said Scotland he said his grandfather had come from Scotland many years ago as a child. He told me his name and I checked it against the list I have with me and there he was. One shocked driver and two delighted Scots... Thank you to all the Quarriers descendant who have made this trip so memorable."

Looking forward to the three presentations in Stormont, Dundas and South Glengarry: June 15 at the Morrisburg Library at 6:30, June 16 at the Long Sault Library at 2:30 and also on June 15 at the Lancaster Library at 6:30.



Databases

A reminder of the following that are available

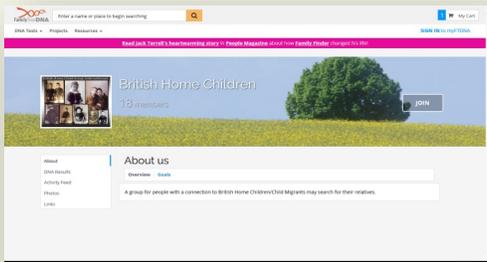
British Home Child Database at Rootschat



E-Petition E-257



British Home Child DNA Project



Upcoming Events

Ontario Genealogical Society Conference

June 3 8:00am to June 5th 5:00pm

Lanark County Genealogical Society 3rd Annual Bus Tour

June 4 @ 12:00pm-1:30pm

Essex County Branch of the OGS

June 13 6:00pm—8:00pm

Morrisburg Library

June 15 6:30pm—8:00pm

Lancaster Library

June 16 6:30pm-8:00pm

Long Sault Library

June 16 2:30-4:00pm

Private Event

June 23 7am-9pm



British Home Child Group International

Stay in Touch!

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