

November, 2016



British Home Child Group International

Marchmont by Sandra Joyce

Design and Layout by Karen Mahoney



It is estimated that over 10,000 children from different organizations passed through the three buildings known as Annie MacPherson's Marchmont Homes in Belleville.

Annie MacPherson, daughter of a Scottish school teacher and evangelist, was educated in Glasgow and at the Home and Colonial Training College in London. After her father died she moved to Cambridge, but soon after returned. Touched by the dire poverty in the east end of London, Annie opened the Home of Industry in Spitalfield in London in 1868.

Located in a former cholera hospital that

housed up to 120 children, it was soon full to overflowing and prompted by Maria Rye's emigration efforts, she began making plans to emigrate children to Canada.

The first Marchmont location was opened in 1870 on Murney Hill in Belleville shortly after bringing in a 'shipload' of children to Canada with Ellen Bilbrough and Leslie Thom. Annie, Ellen and Leslie quickly realized that their method of distributing the children from their point of entry in Quebec to Hamilton was far from ideal. A shelter to regroup was needed after the long voyage out of which they could recruit placement families.

According to James Gilchrist in his book, Marchmont, a letter had been given to Ellen Bilbrough in Quebec, from 'an aged lady in Belleville saying she had heard of (their) coming...would (they) leave some boys in Belleville where homes were awaiting them.'

Belleville had a thriving, prosperous community and seemed a prime location to distribute children around southern Ontario. The Warden of the Council of the County of Hastings offered the Murney Hill location, a former Highland Avenue residence for invalid soldiers, rent-free if Miss MacPherson chose Belleville as a permanent location for her Distribution Home for her 'London Wanderers.'

However, after only two years, a fire ravaged the property and it was the cause of the tragic death of five-year-old Robbie Gray after he ran back into the burning building.

Another site was needed. A new location, on Yeoman's Hill in the West End of Belleville, was purchased by friends of Miss MacPherson. Formerly known as Charlement Lodge, it was located on three and a quarter acres at 193 Moira Street and renamed Marchmont.

It wasn't long before tragedy struck again and the second Marchmont burned to the ground in 1875. This time Miss MacPherson's friends found a great supporter in Senator Billa Flint who rallied people to raise the funds for a new building, at the same address, this time made of brick. *Continued on page 2....*

Marchmont.... *continued*



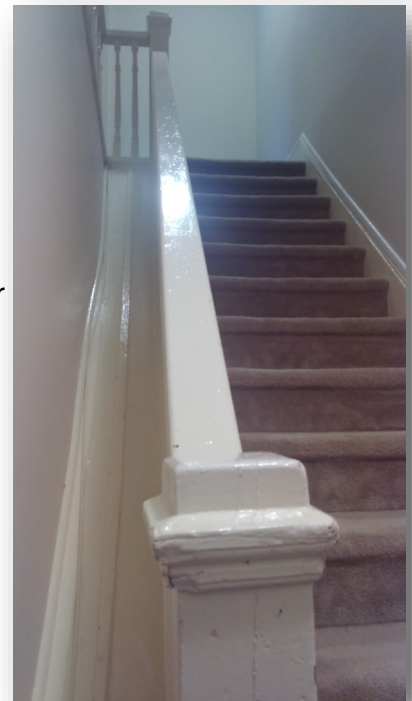
In 1875, Annie turned the running of the Home over to Ellen Bilbrough who remained there until her death in 1900. Ellen's husband Reverend Wallace, who had remarried, carried on until his retirement in 1913 and Marchmont was supposed to be taken over by the Manchester and Salford Homes. They ceased operations after deciding not to bring any children to Canada until after the war.

In 1920, Lillian Birt, who was Annie MacPherson's niece, had taken over the running of the

Liverpool Sheltering Home in Knowlton, Quebec from her mother, Louisa Birt. Lillian announced that the Liverpool Sheltering Home was going to assume the responsibility of Marchmont. William H. Merry, a nephew of Annie MacPherson and Louisa Birt, who had also been superintendent at MacPherson's Stratford Receiving Home, became the new superintendent of Marchmont until the doors were finally closed in August, 1925.

Many different organizations used the Marchmont Homes to bring their children to Canada: Barnardo's, Quarrier's, Mrs. Smyly from Ireland, Mrs. Blaikie and Thomas Gutherie from Scotland and the Manchester and Salford Boys' and Girls' Refuges, among others.

If you would like to view Marchmont, it is difficult to see from Moira Street as newer buildings were erected closer to the street. Converted into apartments, the new address is 159 Yeomans Street.



Billa Flint by Sandra Joyce



Senator Billa Flint from Belleville was one of Annie MacPherson's staunchest allies and friends from the beginning of her work in bringing British Home Children to Canada. He was instrumental in helping her raise funds to provide a receiving home, called Marchmont, and supported her when she was under scrutiny by the British and Canadian governments.

When allegations of mistreatment, improper placement and supervision of children reached Britain, an inquiry was launched by the British government. Inspector Andrew Doyle was sent to Canada to report on the children's welfare and aftercare. Issued in 1875, Doyle's report was scathing and although singling out Maria Rye for inadequate supervision and placement of the children, Mr. Doyle also mentioned Annie MacPherson. The Canadian Government immediately set up their own Commons Select Committee on Immigration to produce its own report. Senator Flint was one of the influential people called upon to testify.

The Senator stated that, although originally there had been some fear in the community around Marchmont of pilfering, noise and disturbance, he had only heard praise about the children being well-behaved. In fact, they never caused any trouble at all, not even picking apples from the well-loaded trees. Senator Flint went on to say that, when Andrew Doyle visited him with the intent of discussing immigration, he was convinced that Doyle had already made up his mind to represent the dark side of things to the exclusion of all others.

Senator Flint also testified that Annie MacPherson's work should not have been mixed up with that of Maria Rye, as they were both quite different.

The Commons Select Committee's findings that were that child labour importation was both successful and beneficial to Canada. The child emigration scheme was allowed to continue.

Senator Billa Flint was a very prominent citizen in his adopted city of Belleville: principal founder of the Canadian Temperance League and previous Mayor, he was also twice-elected MLA for Hastings County in the Ontario Provincial Parliament. He began working at age 11 with his American born father who was a hard-drinking Brockville merchant and hotel-keeper. However, he left for Belleville in 1829 to set up business because he objected to the sale of liquor at his father's store. *Continued on page 4.....*

Billa Flint.... *continued*

The report of the Committee appointed to confer with Miss McPherson, respecting the introduction of immigrants, was presented.

Hon. Mr. Flint said that the Committee had obtained the house and grounds of Marchmont for the annual rent of \$280. The action of Miss McPherson promises to introduce a very useful class of immigrants, farm servants and others into the County, both children and adults. Several children, from 5 years and upwards have been brought out for adoption, several of whom have found permanent homes, and others sent out on trial.

The Wardens said the result so far had been highly satisfactory. The promoters of the scheme were contemplating the renting of a farm, where the new-comers might be taught to work, and prepared for their future vocation.

Flint immediately saw Belleville's potential and great location on the Bay of Quinte. Soon, he began to transform the mouth of the Moira River with wharfs, warehouses and a steam sawmill and drew on the forest resources from the surrounding area. Due to his success, he was appointed a magistrate in 1836 and made president of Belleville's Board of Police.

Flint not only developed flour, oats and barley mills on the tributaries of the Moira River. He also erected sawmills, started a furniture factory and machine shops as well as speculating in a short-lived gold rush in Maudoc Township. Flint also was responsible for the extensive harvesting of the forests in the area.

Flint became involved with various transportation schemes.

He invested in steamship companies and

built roads. He called for improvements to the St. Lawrence River and in 1868 he headed a delegation to promote the construction of a channel between the Bay of Quinte and Wellers Bay (the Murray Canal). Flint supported a railway to link Belleville and Marmora via Tweed and Bridgewater, but it didn't come to fruition. The following failure of Toronto and Ottawa Railway provided a serious blow to his businesses.

He acquired the mills owned by James Cleak at York Mills and a few years later was successful in having the village renamed Bancroft in honour of his mother-in-law, Elizabeth Ann Bancroft. However, by 1883, fires, railway failures, and advancing age contributed to Flint's mostly retiring from active business.

Flint had voted against confederation in 1865 because of his opposition to a non-elected senate, to separate schools and government financing of the Intercolonial Railway. However, he was still made a Senator and remained so till his death in 1894 at the age of 89.

DID YOU KNOW

For twenty years from 1946 all the Wimbledon ball boys came from Barnardo's Goldings school in Hertfordshire where they learnt a valuable trade to help get them into work. Being a ball boy was a prized role that had a positive impact on their lives and contributed towards the success of The Championships. Only one third of the schools' students aged 14 to 18 became ball boys, so competition to be selected was fierce.

The Siberian (1884-1912) by Sandra Joyce



The *Siberian* and its sister ship the *Carthaginian*, were built in 1884 in Glasgow by the Govan Shipbuilding Co. and operated under the Allan Line out of Liverpool, England. The *Siberian* was launched on June 12 of that year and her maiden voyage from Glasgow to Quebec and Montreal was just three months later.

Her ports of departure alternated between Glasgow and Liverpool and she seems to

have been busiest in her early years. According to the Library and Archives Canada, there were 2,000 British Home Children brought to Canada on this ship.

The Allan Shipping line, founded by Scottish Captain Alexander Allan of Ayrshire, was the largest internationally privately owned shipping company by the 1880s. The Captain's second son, Hugh had previously ousted the Cunard Line for the extremely lucrative British Royal Mail contract between Britain and North America.

When the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) was completed in 1886, that company was awarded the China Mail contract. In the beginning, they chartered ships and then built three Em-press liners for the Far East service sailing from Vancouver in 1891. They also relied on chartering ships from other shipping companies including the Allan line for the Atlantic link for the all-important Hong Kong mail service. That same year CPR created the Canadian Pacific Steamship Company (CPSC).



In 1891, the Allan Line took over the State Line (founded in 1872) and was often referred to as the Allan & State Line. In 1892, the *Siberian* was listed as sailing for the Allan and State Line with her destination as New York. In 1897, the various branches of the Allan shipping empire were under one company, Allan Line Steamship Company Ltd., of Glasgow. The company by then had added offices in Boston and London.

CPSC acquired the successful Allan Line in 1917 however the SS *Siberian's* fate had already been sealed when she was broken up at Falmouth in England in 1912.

We had another successful weekend at Fanshawe Pioneer Village celebrating British Home Child Day in Ontario!



Author, Brad Barnes dropped by his old high school in St. Thomas and donated 25 books to the school history department to be given to motivated students to complete a 2500 word essay about British Home Children and make an argument of why or why not the Federal Government should apologize. Brad will keep us up to date on the outcome!



UPCOMING EVENTS - November 2016

5th Annual Kitchener Public Library**Genealogy Fair**

November 5th - 8am - 9pm

Kitchener, Ontario

Ontario Legislature

November 11th

Toronto, Ontario

CFUW Hamilton Club

November 15th 7pm-9pm

Hamilton, Ontario

Ganaraska Valley Probus Club

November 24th 9am - 12pm

Port Hope, Ontario

Congratulations to the following who won door prizes at
British Home Child Day

Tabatha - One year World Subscription to Ancestry

Ryan - One year World Subscription to Find My Past

Valerie - Ancestry DNA Kit

Donna - Scotlands People Credits

Stephen - One Year World Subscription to Find My Past



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