

LUCY MAUD MONTGOMERY (1874-1942)

How many of you have heard of the book, "Anne of Green Gables"? Do you know who wrote it? Well, let me tell you about her life.

Lucy Maud Montgomery was born on November 30, 1874 in a small town called Clifton Corners (which is now New London) on Prince Edward Island. (Ask children if they know where PEI is.) Her mother, Clara, became very ill with tuberculosis, a lung disease. Now-a-days, if people get that illness which we call TB they can be cured, but back in the late 1800's there was no medicine which would cure her, and Clara died at the young age of 23. Lucy Maud was not quite two years old at the time, and because he was often away on business her father, Hugh, took her to live with Clara's parents on a farm just outside the town of Cavendish. The little girl was called Maud. She hated being called Lucy and never wanted to be called by that name.

Maud didn't have many children to play with, and so she used her imagination and invented playmates. She came from a long line of storytellers and poets, and so she just loved to listen to the stories that her Aunt Mary told her about people in her family and events that happened long before Maud had been born. She loved to read the works of great authors such as Shakespeare and Sir Walter Scott and great British And American poets. Her grandparents were very religious, and so Maud read and knew the bible very well, too.

When she was nine years old she started writing poetry and continued to write all through her life. At first she sent her poems to newspapers and magazines, but they were rejected and sent back to her. This made her feel discouraged but that did not stop her from writing just for the fun of it, and of course, the more she wrote the better she got. She even started a diary when she was nine years old, but nothing important happened in her life, so she stopped it. However, when she was almost fifteen in 1889 she started a diary again and kept writing in it for the next fifty-three years. These diaries have now been made into several books.

Maud's father lived in Alberta, and he had married again to a woman much younger than himself. They had a baby, and Maud's father thought that now he had settled down it was time to invite Maud to come and live with them. Hugh's father, Maud's grandfather brought her out to Prince Albert to live with Hugh and his new wife. It didn't work out well. Maud was fifteen years old, and her new step-mother was twenty-seven. There was not enough age difference for Maud to feel that this woman was a mother to her. Maybe an older sister, but not a mother who had to be obeyed. Her step-mother made lots of rules and expected Maud to follow them. She treated Maud like a servant and gave her lots of housework to do. Maud had started school in Prince Albert, but with so much to do in the house she stopped going to school so she could get her work done.

She had made friends and was very happy outside the house. They had a lot of activities to keep them busy, and when Maud had time she kept on writing and sending her stories and poems to newspapers and magazines. Many of these stories and poems were published. Once she even won a prize. Soon

there was a second baby in the house, and there was more work to do. Maud's father loved her very much, but he just didn't see that Maud was being treated like a servant, so Maud told him she wanted to go back to Prince Edward Island. She loved her father very much and always did. She just couldn't live in the same house as her step-mother. So back she went to her grandparents house. She was sixteen years old.

Girls of that age often got married, but she didn't want to get married and spend the rest of her life managing a home and family. She wanted to finish high school. She wanted to be a writer. She knew that she needed a good education, but her grandparents did not agree. They thought that a girl did not need a good education. So, for a year Maud, who could play the piano and organ, gave music lessons to children. She continued to write and send work to magazines. After that year she decided to go back to school to study to become a teacher, but she had been out of school for a long time. She went back to her old school in Cavendish to study for her college entrance examination. That took a lot of courage on her part.

Her grandparents finally agreed to pay her tuition at Prince of Wales College in Charlottetown so she could become a teacher. She lived in a lady's house while she went to college. Maud decided to study really hard so that she could take all the subjects that she needed in one year instead of the usual two. She graduated and started to look for a job. Her first job was in a one-room schoolhouse with 48 children all in different grades. That year was really difficult. She earned \$179.58 for the whole year and had to pay room and board out of it. She saved what she could because she wanted to go to a real college and get a Bachelor of Arts degree. Her grandmother finally gave her the extra money she needed to enroll in Dalhousie College in Halifax. She was there for only one year because she couldn't afford to stay and earn her degree.

She started getting paid for her stories. At first small amounts such as five dollars. She got another teaching job, but it was not a good paying job. She got engaged to a second cousin, Edwin Simpson who was studying to become a minister. She liked him, but she did not love him. She did not want to become a minister's wife. She enjoyed music, dancing and having fun. Ministers' wives were not supposed to enjoy those activities. So, she broke off the engagement.

Her Grandfather Macneill died, and Maud went back to live with her grandmother to help her. She kept on writing even 'tho nine out of ten of the stories and poems she sent out were sent back. She never told anyone about the many rejections she had, so people thought that everything she wrote was published.

Her father died in 1900. Even 'tho she had not seen him very often, she missed him. In 1901 she got a job on the staff of a newspaper, the Daily Echo in Halifax, Nova Scotia. She started work as a proof reader, correcting spelling and grammar, and gradually started writing columns for the paper. She was the only woman on the professional staff. At that time women were usually secretaries or typists, but she did not get paid well. She only got five dollars a week which was a very low salary. I think that her employers did not pay her well because she was a women. She could not live on that small salary, and although she loved

her job she returned to her grandmother, and there she stayed for the next nine years.

She kept on writing. In 1902 she earned nearly \$600 from her stories and poems. In 1905 she earned \$700.

That was a very good salary for a man. It was almost unheard of for a woman to earn that much. Maud had a writer's notebook. Whenever she had an idea for a story she jotted it down in her notebook. In 1895 she had written "Elderly couple apply to orphanage asylum for a boy. By mistake a girl is sent to them". (Make sure children understand 'orphanage asylum'.) Ten years later Maud was looking for an idea for a story and found her note. At first it was not going to be a long story, but she had so many ideas about her character, Anne Shirley who was red haired, outspoken and imaginative, that Maud knew she had to write a novel.

She sent it to four publishers who rejected it. The fifth publisher, L. C. Page, agreed to publish it. They asked her if she wanted to sell it for \$500 or did she want royalties. She would get nine cents for every book sold. Maud knew nothing about the business end of selling a book. She wisely said she would take the royalties, but then she had to sign a contract. As it turned out many of the things in the contract were bad for Maud, but she did not fully understand what she was signing, and she was afraid if she did not agree, then they would not publish her book. (When you are grown up, and you have to sign a contract, make sure you understand ALL of it.)

"Anne of Green Gables", Maud's first book was published in 1908. Her first cheque for the royalties was \$1,730. A large amount in those days, but it could have been larger if the publishers had been more honest and fair with her. One of the things that the contract said was that the publishers had the "dramatic rights". That meant that if and when "Anne of Green Gables" or any of the other books that Maud wrote in the next five years were made into plays or films, Maud would not get a cent. All the money would go to the publishers. Also, although Maud's books were most successful the royalties would stay the same—nine cents a book. Not fair.

Do you know what a pen pal is? Well, Maud had two pen pals for forty years. They exchanged letters frequently. The pen pals were men, but Maud was not interested in them in a romantic way. However, she did want to get married and have a family, and when a young minister named the Rev. Ewan Macdonald came to Cavendish they became engaged. She did not marry him until her grandmother died in 1911. She was 36 years old, and he was 40.

After their marriage the Rev. Macdonald got a position in a little place called Leaskdale which is about 80 kilometers from Toronto. Their son, Chester was born in 1912 and a second son Ewan Stuart was born in 1915. Maud had been right about not wanting to be a minister's wife. She liked him, but hated having to do all the things a minister's wife had to do. (Personally I can't imagine why she married a minister if she didn't want to live that kind of life.) However, she had a strong sense of duty and tried to do all the things that she should do. They were in Leaskdale for fifteen years, and in another small village called Norval for nine. Then Ewan retired. They moved to Toronto where she named the house they lived in "Journey's End". That was a

very good name for the last house that she had.

She had difficulty with her first publishers and even ended up in a law suit with them. She eventually won. The money she got from writing her books made her quite a rich woman, and the family was able to live comfortably with servants to help her in the house. Ewan was not happy that she continued to write under her own name. He thought she should write as "Mrs. Ewan Macdonald". In those days a married woman was always referred to by her husband's name. It's not like that now-a-days.

Over the years her husband became depressed and for the rest of his life he had trouble off and on with feeling sad and depressed. Maud was the opposite of her husband. She was always writing and wrote twenty-five books and numerous short stories and poems. She liked working with young people and even directed a youth theatre while she was in Norval. She was a good speaker and was often invited to give lectures. She loved new things and was quick to buy the newest inventions such as a record player and an automobile.

In 1940 Maud fell and injured her right arm quite badly. The arm never got really better, and Maud was never quite the same after that. She worried about World War 11 which was being fought at the time; and she worried about her son and his wife who were having trouble with their marriage. Her health was failing, and on April 24, 1942 at the age of sixty-seven she died. Her husband died two years later. They were both buried in Cavendish, Prince Edward Island.

Her books are just as popular now as they were when they were first published. She is known throughout the world and is one of Canada's most famous authors.

Anna Bloom

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