



## The L.M. Montgomery Collection at the University of Guelph

—Lorne Bruce, Wayne Johnston, and Helen Salmon

With just over six hundred items, the L.M. Montgomery Collection in the University of Guelph Library special collections has become an essential national repository for Montgomery studies and an important supplement to the Library's extensive Canadian Scottish collections. These materials all came to the University of Guelph library through negotiations initiated and assisted by Dr. Mary Rubio of Guelph's English Department, who had sought out Montgomery's surviving son and literary executor, Dr. Stuart Macdonald (1915–1982), and who recognized the historical and literary value of his private collection of Montgomery's journals, scrapbooks, reading library, and personal memorabilia. The University of Guelph purchased Montgomery's personal diaries and scrapbooks from Dr. Macdonald in 1981, and a second large collection of material was purchased from his widow, Ruth

Macdonald, following his death in 1982. In 2000, the manuscript of *Rilla of Ingleside*, thought to have been lost, was donated to the collection by Emily and Murray Woods. Subsequent additions to the collection (letters, postcards, and variant editions of Montgomery's works) from a number of private donors have continued to make it grow. In 2008, the scholarly context of the collections has been much enriched by Dr. Rubio's donation of her personal collection of critical and creative materials related to L.M. Montgomery, which were the basis of her recent biography, *Lucy Maud Montgomery: The Gift of Wings*.

At the heart of the L.M. Montgomery Collection are Montgomery's journals, which consist of ten legal-size written volumes spanning the years 1889 to 1942, and five scrapbooks covering the years 1910 to 1936. Four of the scrapbooks provide additional information on her activities and



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interests, while a fifth contains newspaper reviews of her books. Both the journals and the scrapbooks are illustrated with pictures, swatches, and other memorabilia.

These journals formed the basis of *The Selected Journals of L.M. Montgomery*, edited in five volumes by Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston and published by Oxford University Press between 1985 and 2004. Interestingly, however, the collection itself includes an edited typescript version of the diaries, prepared by L.M. Montgomery herself shortly before her death, which provides insight into how the author wished to re-shape and revise her private diary writings for publication. Even though Montgomery sometimes expanded her original comments on key events or anecdotes to add in more detail, this edited version is less than half the length of the original hand-written diaries.

Although Montgomery's five large scrapbooks do not provide as personalized a form of insight as her journals do, they provide us with a "time-capsule" lens through which we can understand the world that she lived in and reacted to. Filled

with newspaper clippings, photos, postcards, pressed flowers, and other memorabilia, the scrapbooks provide a temporal timeline of the events (both personal and public) that Montgomery considered to be of significance and interest in her life. Her views of historical events and of herself as a (female) author are reflected through the artifacts that she chose to highlight and preserve in her personal scrapbooks.

A special sub-section of the L.M. Montgomery Collection is the L.M. Montgomery Library, with 175 books from the author's private library as it existed in 1942. These titles reflect a wide diversity of reading interests, with many Victorian authors represented (particularly the Romantics, Sir Walter Scott, Charles Dickens, Anthony Trollope, and the Canadian writer Bliss Carman), but also including such late-Victorian authors as James M. Barrie and James Anthony Froude, whose popular books on British history and on the writer Thomas Carlyle are represented by seventeen titles. Montgomery also seems to have enjoyed Agatha Christie later in life, as there were eight titles by this author in her library. The works in Montgomery's library ranged

in date from 1832 to the 1940s, although many of the titles have imprint dates or inscriptions dating from 1896 to 1910 (the period during which she was first developing her skills as a writer). Many of these books have scattered annotations and inserts, and almost every work is inscribed with the author's distinctive signature and logo of a tiny black cat. Of most value for literary scholars in this collection are those few titles that date back to her early years in Prince Edward Island and that were owned and kept by her throughout her lifetime. These titles typically contain annotations and markings that provide valuable insight into this author's literary opinions, preferences, and influences. The longest-owned and best-loved volumes from her personal library (judging by their worn physical condition and numerous underlined sections) include copies of Sir Walter Scott's *Talisman* (published in 1832, inscribed 1906) and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Poems* (1844), as well as works by Wordsworth (1885, inscribed 1897), Whittier (published circa 1895, inscribed 1897), Longfellow (1894, inscribed 1896), Byron (1911, inscription from 1912), and Sir Walter Scott (1870).

The L.M. Montgomery Papers comprise a selection of materials including the original manuscript of *Rilla of Ingleside* (showing the author's extensive revisions and annotations),

typescripts of *The Blythes are Quoted* (an unpublished collection of short stories and poems begun in 1940), and a short story entitled "The House Party at Smoky Island," published in *Weird Tales* in August 1935. The collection also contains royalty statements, correspondence and legal materials relating to Montgomery's estate, and genealogical notes relating to the history of PEI and the Montgomery and Macneill families, as well as the author's will and other business correspondence and records (for example, a ledger of poems and stories sold, royalty statements, and contracts). A letter from L.C. Page from April 1907 marks the acceptance of *Anne of Green Gables* for publication, and a letter from Mark Twain's secretary in October 1908 quotes Twain's description of Anne as "the dearest & most moving & most delightful child since the immortal Alice." A 1935 letter from Canada's Prime Minister R.B. Bennett congratulates Montgomery on her appointment as an officer of the Order of the British Empire (the medal awarded upon this occasion is also part of the collection). Finally, social and political context for Montgomery's life is provided by a microfilm collection of local newspapers that corresponds with the periods of Montgomery's life when she lived in Prince Edward Island, Halifax, and Georgetown.

The L.M. Montgomery Publications include



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an extensive collection of first and subsequent editions of her works in many different languages, a collection that continues to grow with the acquisition of new and variant editions as they become available. These editions of Montgomery's works are supplemented by twenty-three signed presentation copies of Montgomery's works in the Library's George B. MacMillan Collection. This Scottish writer was a valued friend and correspondent of Montgomery from 1903 onward.

Not all of the L.M. Montgomery collections are textual in nature. The L.M. Montgomery Picture Collection contains 1273 photos, 1181 negatives, three family photo albums, and a number of professional portraits of the author and her family members, including a framed daguerreotype of Montgomery's father with an accompanying lock of his hair at age sixteen (a common keepsake in Victorian times). Montgomery was an avid

photographer, and her personal collection of negatives and prints spanned from the 1890s to the 1940s. She took pictures of everything that she loved in her life—family, friends, pets, and favourite natural scenes, as well as many interior and exterior shots of her various homes. Most of the prints in the collection have been inscribed by Montgomery herself. Since they represent a popular and rich visual resource for scholars and researchers of Montgomery and other women of her time, these photos were recently selected as the first elements in Guelph's collections to be digitized and made accessible for public viewing.

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nearly all women of Montgomery's generation and referred to frequently in her writings. Several ceramic pieces represent Canadian taste in household decoration from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries; most notable among these are a matching pair of Staffordshire pottery dogs, purchased by the author on her honeymoon in 1911, which were the prototypes for the "Gog" and "Magog" statues so treasured by Montgomery's most famous literary heroine Anne Shirley. Broken pieces of the "Dark Jug" (a Woolner family heirloom from 1826, said to have inspired her 1931 novel *A Tangled Web*) are also part of the L.M. Montgomery Artifact Collection.

As the largest, most comprehensive and significant collection of archival material and personal artifacts documenting Montgomery's life and works, the L.M. Montgomery Collection at the University of Guelph Library has assisted numerous international scholars in producing a wide variety of scholarly works that focus not only on her published works, but that also document the life of an early-Canadian (woman) writer. Using the collections, researchers have been able to explore and document the challenges and successes in L.M. Montgomery's personal and professional life, her contributions to Canadian culture and to the perception of Canadian culture from abroad, and how her writings have shaped the development of

girls and young women in Canada and abroad over the past 100 years.

Digitization of photographs and other historical artifacts in the L.M. Montgomery Collection is expensive and time-consuming, but the effort is warranted because of the compelling advantages in the areas of access and preservation. The University has undertaken an extensive digitization project to make its large collection of Montgomery memorabilia accessible to scholars and fans everywhere. We began with the digitization of L.M. Montgomery's personal photography collection, which has been made available through the newly launched Lucy Maud Montgomery Research Centre website, <<http://www.lmmrc.ca>>, hosted at the University of Guelph Library. In addition to the images, this website provides other scholarly contexts for the study of Montgomery, including a searchable database of critical scholarship and links to relevant websites, museums, and libraries. The photography collection is also now part of the OurOntario gateway, <<http://www.ourontario.ca>>, which provides access to the digital collections of libraries, archives, museums, historical societies, community groups, government agencies, and private collections in Ontario and across Canada. To date, all of the L.M. Montgomery journal volumes have been photographed and more than 1,200 images have been coded with metadata for

searching on OurOntario. Future work planned at Guelph includes entering photographs from the journals into OurOntario and providing online access for the scrapbooks.

With such a wide variety of formats (manuscripts, published works, multimedia recordings, physical artifacts, and digital

surrogates), the University of Guelph library is a rich resource for those wishing to study and explore the work of L.M. Montgomery. We are hopeful that digitizing the L.M. Montgomery Collection will provide us with a template that can be expanded to help “liberate” some of our other special collections.

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