

British Home Children Advocacy & Research Association

June 2014 Newsletter

Designed and written each month
By Sandra Joyce & Lori Oschefski

BHCARA News for June

July 28th First World War Commemoration Service at Black Creek Pioneer Village, Toronto, Ontario

Tickets should be bought in advance by phone 416-667- 6295 or online booking at <https://shop.trca.on.ca/category/tickets/> using the promotional code. BHCRA2014. Select the ticket you want to purchase. When you get to the check out, it will ask if you have a promotion code, enter it there and you will receive a discount on the admittance cost.

Cadets from Camp Borden will be presenting a colour guard and will stand at attention during the service. Speakers, including British Home Child descendant Don Cherry, will be piped in by members of the White Heather Pipe and Drums.

A block of rooms has been set aside for July 27-28th at the Extended Stay Toronto Vaughan hotel. For All Reservations: Please contact the hotel directly at 905 856 9600 and reference the World War I British Home Children at Black Creek Pioneer Village Block. This rate be available until July 2 only.

September 28th 2014 BCPV Toronto event

Dinner tickets for September 28th are limited, order them now, includes admission and parking. For information on how to purchase tickets please visit: www.britishhomechildrenadvocacy.weebly.com/sept-28th-bhc-day.html

Exhibit at BCPV in Toronto

The BCPV exhibit of Canada's largest collection of BHC artefacts and information will be opening at the end of June.

New book released

Sean Arthur Joyce has just released his new book "Laying the Children's Ghosts to Rest: Canada's Home Children in the West". Mr. Joyce wrote the book after discovering his Grandfather was a BHC. This book has made the non-fiction bestsellers list in Calgary. Copies of the book are available through Amazon.ca

Avery Santos

Eleven year old Avery Santos presented her British Home Child Display and a power point on the British Home Children at the Regional Heritage Fair at Toronto's Fort York on Tues. Apr. 29th. She was 1 of 20 students picked from all grade 4 & 5 classes in her school who chose & researched topics unique to our Canadian Heritage. She has a connection to her topic, as her great, great, grandfather was a BHC! She is spreading the word on British Home Children to her classmates and beyond. Executive Director Canada, Sandra Joyce was on hand to support Avery.



Featured child of the month Beatrice May Smee



Little Maisie Smee recalled the day she celebrated her fifth birthday. Her 'Gram' gave her a pretty little Chinese teacup - 'to keep for her own', balloons and sweets. She lived with her mum and frequently saw her grandparents. Two days later, as she said later in life, was the end of her real happiness. Her mother gave birth to another child and little Maisie was placed in Barnardo's Baby Castle without any explanation. Her clothes were taken away and her hair cut off. She was put into a room full of cots and spent her days looking out the window for her mother. Nobody called her Maisie anymore. She became Beatrice - Beattie-Smee.

After a serious bout with smallpox, during which she wished she would die as the heartache of losing her mother was too much for her, she was sent to a Home in Shirley, Southampton, along with 25 other girls of whom she was the youngest. Her stay there was very unhappy - the matrons treated the girls very harshly and food was scarce. Her diet consisted of bread and drippings much of the time.

Before she left England to go to Canada at the age of 14, she was given a hymn book. On the inside cover, there is a dedication from her Matron, a woman she was to refer to as 'Mother'



She is praised for "improvement in character" and referred to a passage from Luke (11.9).

She sailed for Canada on the SS Minnedosa, leaving homeland and everyone she had ever known behind and arrived in Quebec on September 28th, 1922. From there she continued to Toronto, where she soon found out that the streets were not paved in gold, as she had been told. She worked as a domestic in London, Ridgetown and Toronto.

At 16, she was able to find and contact her birth father, who was married with a family of his own. They exchanged a few letters. He even sent her a box of chocolates, although he told her never to write her real name on the envelope. After a few years, her mother somehow found out and sent them both an angry note. At that point, Beatrice told her mother and her father to leave her alone as they hadn't wanted her anyway. At this point, she herself was married and had a baby on the way. Little Maisie had become Beatrice May Forster.

In 1930, when Beatrice was 21, her mother wrote one last sad letter, begging her forgiveness. They never saw one another again.

Beatrice didn't talk about her experiences until much later in life, and even then she only confided in a few (her daughter, for example). When her daughter finally got her mother's records from Barnardo's, a note was attached: "We are sorry that the details concerning your mother's early years make very sad reading and we hope that she will not be too distressed to receive this information. We are glad to know that after these experiences that she eventually knew the happiness of family life."

The hymn book has been loaned to the Black Creek Pioneer Village Display by Beatrice's Grandson Thomas Waldock