HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR 80th YEAR

Ours is a unique Club in the Literary history of Canada. It was the earliest Club of its kind to be organized in this country, spurred by a great cultural movement across the continent. The Club started as, and has continued to be, a Study Group, demanding a high standard of research and literary ability. The Minute Books are complete from December 3, 1892 to December 1, 1972.

1972 has been a most memorable year. The first highlight was the 80th year Pilgrimage to the restored Laura Secord Homestead, made possible by the Laura Secord Candy shops.

May 13th dawned bright and clear. Many members and friends made their way to the parking lot at Welland Avenue United Church. A large bus with a very jovial driver arrived in good time at 11 A.M. and we started on our way to the Pillar and Post at Niagara-on-the-Lake. Mrs. W. Jeffery distributed the programmes and looked after the seating arrangements on the bus.

After the Luncheon, the President, Mrs. G.F. Eller, welcomed the guests to our 80th year pilgrimage, held to honour our Charter members and Laura Secord, a forgotten heroine for many years. She said it was good to reflect on the attainments reached.

Mrs. G.M. Armstrong introduced Mr. Burke-Gaffney of the Laura Secord Candy Shops who had made the Pilgrimage possible.

The Laura Secord Candy shops decided to obtain the property in Queenston in 1967. One of the first decisions made was to restore the Homestead.
At the Laura Secord School in Queenston, Mr. Burke-Gaffney showed slides of the work done. He outlined many difficulties which had been encountered in this project. No deed could be found for the Secord property and much research had to be done before work could be started. An important factor in the decision of the authentic spot was the Marker placed many years ago by the Women's Literary Club. This, together with material obtained from the Archives, established the location of the original homestead.

The Marker had been moved from the spot where it had stood so long, to a place just outside the gate. Mrs. G.M. Armstrong unveiled the Marker which had originally placed on the property in 1901. After the unveiling we noticed some words had been added.

They were: "This Marker was placed in 1901 by the Women's Literary Club of St. Catharines to honour Laura Secord and was re-dedicated in 1972 by members of the Club on the occasion of their 80th annual pilgrimage.

At the Laura Secord monument at Queenston Heights, a Laurel wreath was placed by Mrs. John Kelder. Mrs. J.A. Marshall paid tribute to Mrs. Curzon and Mrs. Currie who, by their writings, aroused public interest in the forgotten heroine. Mrs. Currie, the founder of the Women's Literary Club of St. Catharines, donated the proceeds of her book toward the erection of the monument and importuned the Federal Government to pay the remainder of the cost.

At the grave of Laura Secord in Drummond Hill cemetery, a floral arrangement was placed by Mrs. H.E. Bedwell. Miss Valette Collard paid tribute to Laura Secord and all concerned in the war of 1812.
A visit to the Lundy's Lane Historical Museum brought the Pilgrimage to a close.

The other "Highlight" of this interesting and eventful year was the 80th Birthday Celebration in the Blue Flame room at the Pen Centre on December 1, 1972.

It began with Dessert and Coffee at 7 P.M. with Mrs. Edith Stewart the convener, assisted by Mrs. H.E. Bedwell and Mrs. W. Jeffery.

The Birthday Cake, decorated with the crest of the Club, the gracious gift of Mrs. G.M. Armstrong and Mrs. J.A. Marshall, was cut by them to make an appropriate and delicious end to the refreshments.

Mrs. G.F. Eller, the President, welcomed the guests. In part she said: "Birthdays are meant to be happy events so let us be happy together." She then called on the Secretary to read some of the letters of congratulation which had been received. These included one from the Hon. Robert Welch, Mayor Mackenzie Chown, Dr. Louise de K. Lawrence and a telegram from the Fine Arts Centre in Banff, Alberta. An extremely interesting package was received from the Literary Club of Baddeck, Cape Breton, comprised of both men and women, also organized in 1892 and still in a healthy condition.

Mrs. G.F. Eller then spoke of the accomplishments of the Club over the years, the title of her address being: "And now we are Eighty." In part she said: "Eighty years of fulfillment of our work and contribution to our Community have been completed and we look forward to many more years of happy association of learning and worthwhile contribution. In our reflections on the past years we pause to remember all those who have enabled us to reach our 80th Birthday."

She then called on Mrs. J. Arbuthnot to light a Tribute Candle to
Mrs. Currie, founder of the Club, and on Mrs. J. Kelder to light one in honour of past members.

Mrs. G.M. Armstrong then introduced the speaker of the evening, Mr. Francis J. Petrie, courtesy of the Lincoln Trust and Savings Company, Niagara Falls, Ontario. He gave a very interesting talk on the history of the Niagara Peninsula with accompanying slides.

Miss Kathleen Duff expressed the deep appreciation of the Club and guests to Mr. Petrie for his very fine illustrated lecture.

A question and answer period followed, showing the keen interest not only of the members, but of everyone present, in the historical treasures of this area.

Later in the month, a Plaque and Citation was received from the Ontario Government. The Citation reads: "On behalf of the HON. W. Davis, Premier, and the Government of Ontario, I extend sincere congratulations at this time when you are celebrating the 80th anniversary of the founding of your Club. It is the hope that your officers and members may enjoy many more of these anniversaries of service to the community in the years to come." It was signed by James W. Snow, Minister of Government Services. The plaque has the Crest and Seal of the Province of Ontario and is decorated with steel button trilliums.

Later still, a letter of congratulation was received from the office of the Prime Minister of Canada, the HON. Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

Elsie M. Stevens
(Miss) Elsie M. Stevens
Secretary;
The Women's Literary Club
of St. Catharines.