

CELEBRATING

Lucy Maud Montgomery's Norval Home

BY ROSALEEN EGAN

► The manse of Norval Presbyterian Church was home to Lucy Maud Montgomery from 1926 to 1935. The house is planned to become a museum and literary centre.
PHOTO BY ROSALEEN EGAN.



The house that Lucy Maud Montgomery (LMM) lived in with her husband Ewan Macdonald while he was Norval's Presbyterian minister, was bought in 2017 by the Heritage Foundation of Halton Hills (HFHH).

"Our vision is to preserve this heritage site that will celebrate the life, the writing and the cultural impact of Lucy Maud Montgomery," says HFHH chair Lois Fraser. "The intention is to attract local, national, and international tourists and students."



► Closer view of the
Norval manse.

PHOTO BY ROSALEEN EGAN

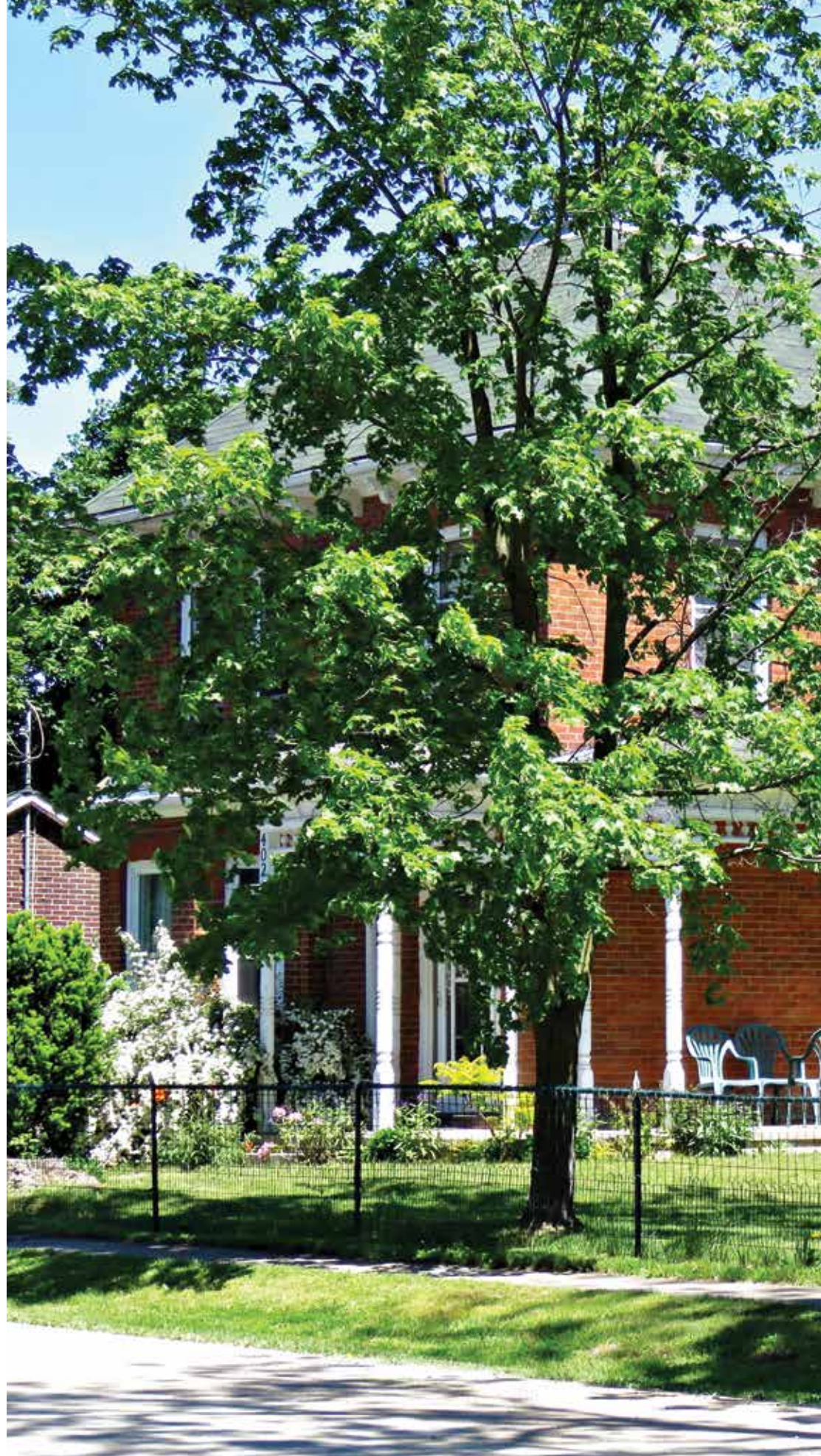


MM, the famous Canadian literary figure and celebrated author of *Anne of Green Gables* and

other novels, wrote in her personal diary on Feb. 28, 1926, “Norval is considered one of the beauty spots of Ontario.” She had recently moved to the village where she lived, wrote and was an active community member for nine years while her husband served a two-point charge, at Norval and Union Presbyterian Churches.

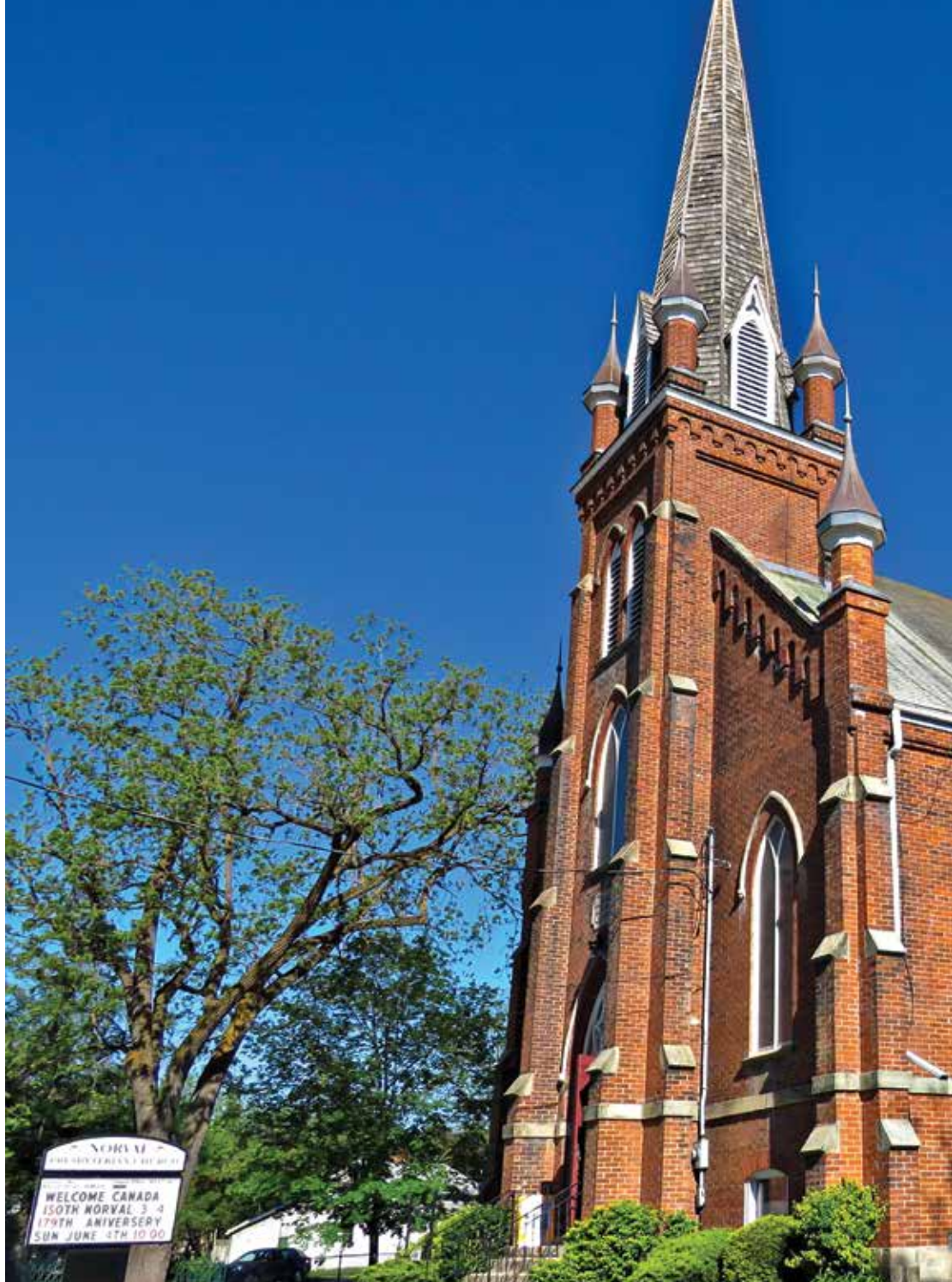
In addition to the manse, the half-acre property on Draper St. includes a barn and a former caretaker’s cottage dating to 1830. HFHH envisions the property as the first anchor in a larger project, the eventual development of the Village of Norval as an unspoiled area of Ontario’s natural beauty where people can visit a leisure and cultural hub year-round. Norval is situated where the Credit River meets Silver Creek at Hwy. #7 in Halton Hills. This year is its 200th anniversary.

The manse was built in 1888 by Norval and Union Presbyterian Churches as a residence for their shared minister. In 2010, the churches separated, each hired their own minister and the manse could no





► Norval Presbyterian Church where LMM's husband was minister. LMM was active in this and her husband's second charge, Union Presbyterian Church near Glen Williams. LMM taught Bible classes and Sunday School, led the Young People's Society and played the church organ.
PHOTO BY ROSALEEN EGAN



longer be used by them.

Kathy Gastle, chair of the Lucy Maud Montgomery Heritage Society of Norval, says "In 2015 I was approached by the churches with the idea of purchasing the manse for preservation. I was already a board member of the Halton Hills Heritage Foundation. The board agreed to purchase the manse for a future museum. The preservation and protection of it was important to Halton Hills. The purchase

took place March 10, 2017."

The purchase was made possible by two gifts of \$100,000 each from HFHH board members, Al and Lois Fraser, and Bob and Elaine Crawford. The Town of Halton Hills donated \$90,000 as part of the Canada 150 celebrations. The two families hold the mortgage and, until all planning approvals are put in place for the museum, the manse will be rented privately.

The town has designated

both the manse and the cottage as properties with cultural heritage value or interest under the Provincial Heritage Act. The HFHH and its partners are preparing an application to the federal government to designate the property as a National Historic Site of Canada.

Except for the addition of a downstairs bathroom, alterations to the kitchen and a glassed-in porch, the manse is in original condition to

LMM's time. It is a two-storey house with two bathrooms, four bedrooms, a living room, study, dining room and spiral staircase. It also has separate maid stairs from the kitchen to a bedroom upstairs.

According to Kathy, "The kitchen will be a central part of the future vision for the museum with a re-creation of Maud's kitchen."

HFHH member Elaine Crawford is related to LMM and has a valuable collection



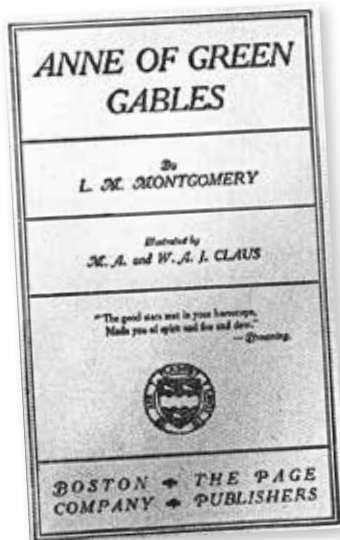
of artifacts belonging to the author, including a hand-written cookbook. LMM wrote “If I had not been a poor devil of an author, I think I would have made an excellent cook.”

The Vision

The plan is to make the manse a state-of-the-art museum that will deliver collaborative projects and interactive exhibits drawn from LMM’s themes in her writing, journals, photographs,

nature writing, and social experiences. The literary centre will focus on her literature through writers, speakers, and partnerships in developing programs with colleges and universities.

LMM was very involved in the Norval community beyond her many church duties, including as an active member of the Women’s Institute. She was an avid diarist and a mother of two boys. She partially wrote or



▲ First page of *Anne of Green Gables*, published 1908. FROM WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



◀ Signed photo of LMM between 1920 and 1930. She lived in Norval from 1926 to 1935.

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► The cottage next to the manse on Draper St. comes with a barn behind it. Plans are to make the cottage an interpretive centre. PHOTO BY MIKE DAVIS.



► Two versions of a logo for the planned museum and literary centre. IMAGES PROVIDED



LUCY MAUD MONTGOMERY

MUSEUM & LITERARY CENTRE

NORVAL ONTARIO CANADA

published six books and filled nearly three volumes of her 10 personal journals in Norval. "In her journals," says Kathy, "LMM writes of the village's extraordinary natural beauty and chronicles the social, economic and technological changes in this era."

The six books published while she lived in Norval are *The Blue Castle* (1926), *Emily's Quest* (1927), *Magic for Marigold* (1929), *A Tangled Web* (1931), *Pat of Silver Bush* (1933), and *Mistress Pat* (1935).

LMM is strongly associated with Prince Edward Island, the province of her birth and the setting of 19 of her 20 novels, most famously *Anne of Green Gables*. She was born November 30, 1874 and died in 1942 in Toronto at the age of 67. Beside

novels, LMM wrote articles, poetry and short stories.

Before moving to Norval, she and her family lived in Leaskdale, ON where the manse is now a national historic site. There is a Lucy Maud Montgomery Museum in Bala where her novel, *The Blue Castle* is set. Norval has a long relationship with these sites and many in Prince Edward Island. HFHH's vision includes partnering with them to help with marketing.

Partners

The University of Guelph is a strategic partner in the project and will provide leadership in organizing, designing and developing interactive exhibits, and collaborate on education and a writer-in-residence program. The university is home of the L.M. Montgomery

Collection, that includes her hand-written journals, photos, personal papers, and more.

HFHH continues to develop partnerships and affiliates with educational institutions, heritage and historical organizations, multiple levels of government agencies, local community and arts, culture, and tourism organizations to advance the quality, scope, and appeal of planned experiences at the L.M. Montgomery Museum and Literary Centre.

Fundraising of three million dollars is necessary for the HFHH vision to succeed. Lois says, "We share the belief that every piece of heritage that we enjoy today was saved by someone in its day, and we invite residents in the Niagara Escarpment area to join us

in being that someone who saved the Village of Norval for future generations."

Charitable donations can be made through: heritagefoundationhalton.ca or by mailing to Heritage Foundation of Halton Hills, 232A Guelph St., Ste. 201, Halton Hills ON L7G 4B1. Receipts are issued for donations over \$25. For information contact Kathy.Gastle@gmail.com.

*Rosaleen Egan is an independent journalist, photographer and playwright near Alliston, with a blog at rosiewrites.com. Her last feature for Niagara Escarpment Views was "Smelling the Norval Rose: The Lucy Maud Montgomery Children's Garden of the Senses," Spring 2018. **NEW***

