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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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# RESEARCH NOTE/ NOTE DE RECHERCHE

## The Dredger's Daughter: Courtship and Marriage in the Baptist Community of Welland, Ontario, 1934-1944

Catherine Gidney

IN 1924 SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD KAY CHETLEY, along with her parents Jennie and Robert, and her sister Roberta, moved to the industrial city of Welland, Ontario. Kay was raised in east Saint John, New Brunswick where her father worked as a stationary engineer on dredging barges.<sup>1</sup> Her mother, from a farming family in Petitcodiac, New Brunswick, had been a primary school teacher until her marriage. The family's economic status thus ranged between the artisan class and the emerging lower-middle class. To maintain that position, Kay's father moved the family to Ontario so that he could take up work in the construction of the new canal. Welland, however, soon became the setting for Kay's courtship, wedding, her first years as a married woman, and her subsequent years as a mother. This typical female life-cycle was played out not only within a tight-knit nuclear family, the dominant familial form in the early 20th century, but also within the community of First Baptist Church, Welland. Kay's life thus provides an illustration of the interconnected-

<sup>1</sup>Stationary engineers tended steam engines on land or sea. This was a demanding, high-risk occupation that required technical expertise.

Catherine Gidney, "The Dredger's Daughter: Courtship and Marriage in the Baptist Community of Welland, Ontario 1934-1944," *Labour/Le Travail*, 54 (Fall 2004), 121-49.

ness of religion, family, courtship, leisure, and work in one Ontario industrial community.

The core of this study is constructed around a series of five-year diaries left by Kay Chetley. This material is supplemented by interviews with family members as well as by available records on the Baptist community. The diaries cover the bulk of the period from 1934 to 1944 and offer a few lines detailing Kay's activities each day. The format of a five-year diary has limits for historical inquiry. This is not a rich reflective diary. There is little room for lengthy introspection and Kay does not choose, except on rare occasions, to reveal intimate details. Neither does she offer any extensive commentary on contemporary society. There are, for example, no mentions of the Depression despite the fact that through the 1930s her future husband usually worked only three days a week, and her marriage was postponed for financial reasons. Similarly, there are almost no references to the war other than its declaration by Britain and then Canada, and the beginning of its end on D-Day.

This paucity of detail on current events or intimate matters is made up for by the abundant information on her daily activities. Her diary entries appear as a series of lists, enumerating chores accomplished, attendance at church and church events, participation in a variety of outings, and visits with friends and family. In her commentary on 19th- and 20th-century Canadian women's diaries, Kathryn Carter contends that diary writing "has the potential to trace threads of meaning in the fragmentation that characterizes human life."<sup>2</sup> Daily entries allow the writer to see the grind of one's daily work as contributing to some greater purpose or end, even, like the "*aide de memoire*" of the travel diary,<sup>3</sup> to remind oneself of the work accomplished, the joys experienced, the sorrows overcome, of the previous day, week, and year. They form an accounting of one's time and life. This individual search for meaning aids historians in their task of recovering the historical conditions of material life. The dailiness of diaries, Bettina Aptheker argues, helps reveal "the patterns women create and the meanings women invent each day and over time as a result of their labours."<sup>4</sup> Moreover, as Margaret Conrad notes, they provide a

<sup>2</sup>Kathryn Carter, ed., *The Small Details of Life: Twenty Diaries by Women in Canada 1830-1996* (Toronto 2002), 19.

<sup>3</sup>Carter, *The Small Details of Life*, 5.

<sup>4</sup>Bettina Aptheker, *Tapestries of Life: Women's Work, Women's Consciousness, the meaning of daily experience* (Amherst 1989), 39. For the need to pay attention to repetitions and the dailiness of tasks see Carter, *The Small Details of Life*, 10, 19; Margo Culley, ed., *A Day at a Time: The Diary Literature of American Women From 1764 to the Present* (New York 1985), 16; Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia A. Huff, "Issues in Studying Women's Diaries: A Theoretical and Critical Introduction," in Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia A. Huff, eds., *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women's Diaries* (Amherst 1996), 11, 19.

crucial source "to construct life stories that reveal much about the women who are conspicuously absent from our public records."<sup>5</sup>

Kay Chetley's diaries thus provide a rich resource that contributes to the process of uncovering the everyday life of a Protestant working-class woman in the first half of the 20th century. This perspective adds considerably to the existing literature. Women's and gender historians have made significant contributions in the past several decades to our knowledge of 20th-century working-class women. Several historical studies, for example, have examined women's paid work and, more recently, their role within the domestic economy.<sup>6</sup> Historians have also begun to unearth middle-class women's religious activities — from their participation in missionary work, to their contribution to temperance organizations and their involvement with youth groups.<sup>7</sup> A few historians have begun to study the relatively unexamined area of working-class religious experience.<sup>8</sup> However, little work has

<sup>5</sup>Margaret Conrad, "'Sundays Always Make Me Think of Home': Time and Place in Canadian Women's History," in Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman, eds., *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History* (1986; Toronto 1991), 101.

<sup>6</sup>See for example, Nancy M. Forestell, "The Miner's Wife: Working-Class Femininity in a Masculine Context, 1920-1950," in Kathryn McPherson, Cecilia Morgan, Nancy M. Forestell, eds., *Gendered Pasts: Historical Essays in Femininity and Masculinity in Canada* (Don Mills 1999), 139-57; Suzanne Morton, *Ideal Surroundings: Domestic Life in a Working-Class Suburb in the 1920s* (Toronto 1995); Joy Parr, *The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men, and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950* (Toronto 1990); Mark Rosenfeld, "'It Was a Hard Life': Class and Gender in the Work and Family Rhythms of a Railway Town, 1920-1950," *Canadian Historical Association Papers* (1988), 237-79; Veronica Strong-Boag, "Keeping House in God's Country: Canadian Women at Work in the Home," in Craig Heron and Robert Storey, eds., *On the Job: Confronting the Labour Process in Canada* (Kingston and Montréal 1986), 124-51; Meg Luxton, *More Than a Labour of Love: Three Generations of Women's Work in the Home* (Toronto 1980).

<sup>7</sup>See for example, Rosemary R. Gagan, *Canadian Methodist Women Missionaries in Canada and the Orient, 1881-1975* (Kingston and Montreal 1992); Ruth Compton Brouwer, *New Women For God: Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Missions, 1876-1914* (Toronto 1990); Sharon Anne Cook, *"Through Sunshine and Shadow": The Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Evangelicalism, and Reform in Ontario, 1874-1930* (Montréal and Kingston 1995); Margaret Prang, "'The Girl God Would Have Me Be': The Canadian Girls in Training, 1915-39," *Canadian Historical Review*, 66 (June 1985), 154-84.

<sup>8</sup>Motivated by what they identify as a tendency among earlier labour historians to overlook or misinterpret the role religion played in workers' lives, several authors of recent studies have endeavoured to rectify this situation. Norman Knowles examines the relationship between Christian churches and the labour movement in his study, "Christ in the Crow'snest: Religion and the Anglo-Protestant Working Class in the Crow'snest Pass, 1898-1918," in Michael Behiels and Marcel Martel, eds., *Nation, Ideas, Identities: Essays in Honour of Ramsay Cook* (Don Mills 2000), 57-72. Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau examine the persistence of working-class revivalism in early 20th century Canada in "'The World of the Common Man Is Filled with Religious Fervour': The Labouring People of Winnipeg and the

been done on the intersection of working-class women's history and religious history.<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, our knowledge of the social history of the Depression remains partial. As Lara Campbell succinctly explains, "much of the richest work done on this decade in Canadian history subsumes the Depression into the topic of the interwar years or into a larger thematic study, such as a history of the labour movement, the development of the welfare state or women's roles in the family or the labour force."<sup>10</sup> Monographs which consider more extensively the impact of the Depression tend to focus on the political and economic context or on particular aspects of social history such as unemployment, relief work, or the emergence of welfare programs.<sup>11</sup> Much less is known for this period about the history of women and family

Persistence of Revivalism, 1914-1925," in G.A. Rawlyk, ed., *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience* (Montréal and Kingston 1997), 337-50. Eric Crouse's work indicates that although evangelists' efforts among workers did not result in increased church memberships, workers in the early 20th century continued to find the message of evangelical Christianity pervasive. See "'They left us pretty much as we were': American Saloon/Factory Evangelists and Canadian Working Men in the Early-Twentieth Century," *Historical Papers 1999: Canadian Society of Church History*, 51-71. For the more extensive international literature reassessing the relationship between religion and the working class see for example, S.C. Williams, *Religious Belief and Popular Culture in Southwark c. 1880-1939* (Oxford 1999); Hugh McLeod, *Piety and Poverty: Working-Class Religion in Berlin, London and New York, 1870-1914* (New York 1996); Callum G. Brown, "The Mechanism of Religious Growth in Urban Societies: British Cities Since the Eighteenth Century," in Hugh McLeod, ed., *European Religion in the Age of Great Cities* (London 1995), 239-62.

<sup>9</sup>For the intersection of working-class women and religion in the nineteenth century see Lynne Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks: Religion, Leisure, and Identity in Late-Nineteenth-Century Small-Town Ontario* (Toronto 1996). Little work exists for the 20th century. Suzanne Morton, in *Ideal Surroundings*, 35, and Joan Sangster, in *Earning Respect: The Lives of Working Women in Small-Town Ontario, 1920-1960* (Toronto 1995), 90-1, 113, briefly point to the centrality of Christianity to concepts of respectability for working-class families. In her study of work and family life in 1930s Montréal, Denyse Baillargeon examines the negative impact of church strictures on women but sheds little light on the church as part of women's associational life or as a system of community support. See Baillargeon, *Making Do: Women, Family and Home in Montréal during the Great Depression*, (Waterloo 1999).

<sup>10</sup>Lara Campbell, "Respectable Citizens of Canada: Gender, Family and Unemployment in the Great Depression, Ontario," PhD thesis, Queen's University, 2002, 7.

<sup>11</sup>See for example John Herd Thompson with Allen Seager, *Canada, 1922-1939: Decades of Discord* (Toronto 1985); H. Blair Neatby, *The Politics of Chaos: Canada in the Thirties* (Toronto 1972); A.E. Safarian, *The Canadian Economy in the Great Depression* (Toronto 1959); John Manley, "'Starve, Be Damned!': Communists and Canada's Urban Unemployed, 1929-39," *Canadian Historical Review*, 79 (September 1998), 466-91; Lorne Brown, *When Freedom Was Lost: The Unemployed, The Agitator, and The State* (Montreal 1987); Nancy Christie, *Engendering the State: Family, Work and Welfare in Canada* (To-

life.<sup>12</sup> In particular we know little of working-class families in which the head of household continued to work during the Depression. For good reasons, historians have focused on the difficulties faced by working men and women in gaining or maintaining employment during the thirties. We know less of how those with a small but steady income negotiated the economic hardships of the time. Nor do we know much about how they spent their leisure time or about the impact of the Depression on their social lives.<sup>13</sup>

These diaries, then, offer a rare glimpse into the familial and religious life of one 20th-century working-class woman. They provide an opportunity to examine the social and religious culture of Welland, especially that of the Baptist community. They allow insight into the nature of 20th-century working-class courtship and the pattern of work and leisure within married life. And they make possible, at least to a limited extent, a greater understanding of working-class patterns of consumption during a period of economic hardship. The diaries can thus help bridge the often disconnected areas of family, religious, women's, and working-class history.

#### *Context: Kay's Background*

By the time Kay and her family arrived in Welland in 1924, the canal and the availability of cheap power had created a vibrant industrial community in the heart of the Niagara Peninsula.<sup>14</sup> Welland, at that time, was predominantly a Protestant and

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ronto 2000); Margaret Little, *No Car, No Radio, No Liquor Permit: The Moral Regulation of Single Mothers in Ontario* (Toronto 1998); James Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914-1941* (Toronto 1983); Alvin Finkel, *Business and Social Reform in the Thirties* (Toronto 1979).

<sup>12</sup>For recent exceptions see Baillargeon, *Making Do*; Sangster, *Earning Respect*; Margaret Hobbs and Ruth Roach Pierson, "When is a Kitchen Not a Kitchen," *Canadian Woman Studies*, 7 (Winter 1986), 71-6. This discussion of the Depression draws on the important historiographical arguments put forward by Campbell in the introduction of "Respectable Citizens of Canada." My thanks to the author for use of this work.

<sup>13</sup>Collections of documents exist on the unemployed and desperately poor: for example, Michiel Horn, ed., *The Dirty Thirties: Canadians in the Great Depression* (Toronto 1972); L.M. Grayson and Michael Bliss, *The Wretched of Canada: Letters to R.B. Bennett, 1930-1935* (Toronto 1971); Barry Broadfoot, *Ten Lost Years, 1929-1939: Memories of Canadians Who Survived the Depression* (Toronto 1973). Less is known of the everyday life of employed workers. One exception is Peter Archibald, "Distress, Dissent and Alienation: Hamilton Workers in the Great Depression," *Urban History Review*, 21 (October 1992), 2-32.

<sup>14</sup>William H. Lewis, *Aqueduct, Merritsville and Welland: A History of the City of Welland, the Beginning Years* (Welland 1997), 49-56, 115, 118; and *Aqueduct, Merritsville and Welland: A History of the City of Welland, the 20th Century* (Welland 2003), Chapters One and Two; John N. Jackson, *The Welland Canals and Their Communities: Engineering, Industrial, and Urban Transformation* (Toronto 1997), 317.

British community.<sup>15</sup> A small French-Canadian population lived on the east side of the city, in what was called "French Town." It supplied labour for two Quebec companies: Empire Cotton Mills and Atlas Steel.<sup>16</sup> A European immigrant population, which supplied much of the labour to Welland's growing industries, generally lived to the south of the city in Crowland township.<sup>17</sup> This immigrant population was both physically and culturally removed from "mainstream" Welland. Indeed, the immigrant community was often referred to in the local press as "the 'foreign section' or the 'foreign quarter'."<sup>18</sup>

As manufacturing and industrial production increased in the Niagara Peninsula through the 19th and early 20th centuries, the canal system was both expanded and re-routed — a development that attracted workers to the town. Hence, the Chetley family's decision to move to Welland in the 1920s so that Robert could take up work on the dredging barges being used to build the fourth Welland Canal. Work on this project occurred between 1913 and 1932. At the height of construction in 1927, close to 4000 men were employed on the new canal.<sup>19</sup> However, as the canal neared completion in the early 1930s and dredging work ceased, Robert had to look for other employment. The family remained based in Welland while Robert accepted dredging jobs that took him as far away as Jamaica.

After moving to Welland, Kay Chetley attended a local business school and then secured a job as private secretary to Cecil B. Bravin, the manager of ElectroMetals (now Union Carbide).<sup>20</sup> Kay was well placed to become a private secretary. For one thing, she was highly educated. In the 1920s relatively few children reached grade eight, even fewer attended high school, and of those only a handful reached the senior levels.<sup>21</sup> Kay, who graduated from grade twelve, the equivalent of first-year university in the Maritimes, thus had an advantage over many other young women looking for work.

While she was well educated, she also took advantage of the burgeoning field of clerical work. Since the late 19th century the clerical sector had gradually opened up to women as an area of employment opportunity.<sup>22</sup> According to the 1931 cen-

<sup>15</sup>Jackson, *The Welland Canals and Their Communities*, 349.

<sup>16</sup>By 1941, in a population of 12, 506, there were over 1300 French-Canadians. See Jackson, *The Welland Canals and Their Communities*, 316.

<sup>17</sup>Jackson, *The Welland Canals and Their Communities*, 343-5.

<sup>18</sup>Carmela Patrias, *Relief Strike: Immigrant Workers and the Great Depression in Crowland, Ontario, 1930-1935* (Toronto 1990), 13.

<sup>19</sup>Jackson, *The Welland Canals and Their Communities*, 269, 274-5; Lewis, *Aqueduct, Merritsville and Welland: A History of the City of Welland, the 20th Century*, Chapter 10.

<sup>20</sup>Interview with Jennifer Brooks, daughter, 31 March 2001.

<sup>21</sup>In the 1920s school-leaving age in Saint John was fourteen and in rural New Brunswick only twelve. Moreover, mandatory school attendance was set at only 80 days or half the school year. See Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Annual Report of Education Statistics in Canada 1922*, 8, *Annual Report of Education Statistics in Canada 1924*, xix-xx.

<sup>22</sup>Alison Prentice et al., *Canadian Women: A History* (1998; Toronto 1996), 279.

sus, women comprised just under 17 per cent of the labour force and women between the ages of 20 and 24 comprised nearly half (47.4 per cent) of that group. Moreover, of all women in the labour force, 17.5 per cent worked in the clerical sector. Kay's employment status, however, ranked above that of the average clerical worker. The position of private secretary was at the top of the clerical hierarchy and entailed a greater status and salary than other clerical jobs.<sup>23</sup>

Despite possessing a higher earning potential than most clerical workers, Kay followed a work pattern similar to that of many young women of the time. Significant numbers of working-class women worked for several years between the time they left school and marriage, usually in their mid-twenties.<sup>24</sup> Continuing to live at home, Kay began work in 1929 at age 21, leaving the workforce only upon her marriage seven years later, in 1936. Kay's work pattern was thus a fairly common one.

The Chetleys were of Loyalist descent and fit well into the Protestant, working-class community of Depression Welland. Kay herself felt strong ties to the British Empire. Indeed, she was steeped in the literature, symbols, and myths of British imperialism. Although she mentioned almost no current affairs in her diary, no royal event went unrecorded. The days following the death of King George V in 1936 are illustrative. On 20 January Kay recorded, "King George died tonight."<sup>25</sup> The next evening she wrote, "Couldn't work this morning for reading newspapers and talking about events."<sup>26</sup> On 22 January she and her sister "got up at 5 am to hear the Proclamation Service from London."<sup>27</sup> On the Sunday following the King's death Kay went to church twice and noted approvingly: "all programs in memoriam of King."<sup>28</sup> Two days later Kay received the day off, as did most other Canadians, for an Empire Holiday in remembrance of the King. She attended a memorial service at the Capitol, a local movie theatre in Welland.<sup>29</sup>

The King's death was not the only time Kay's diary was filled with news about the British monarchy. Kay made sure to witness the royal visit of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth to Niagara Falls in June 1939. She recorded in her diary: "Went to Falls at 2. Had very good place on Victoria Ave. Saw King and Queen

<sup>23</sup>Veronica Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled: Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada, 1919-1939* (Markham 1988), 43, 53.

<sup>24</sup>Conrad, "Sundays Always Make Me Think of Home," 103-4; Prentice *et al.*, *Canadian Women: A History*, 250. During this period women usually lived at home and gave their paycheques to their mothers, for which they were given pin-money in return. See J. Synge, "Young Working Class Women in Early 20th Century Hamilton — Their Work and Family Lives," in A.H. Turriffin, ed., *Proceedings of the Workshop Conference on Blue-Collar Workers and Their Communities* (Toronto 1976), 141.

<sup>25</sup>Private Collection of Jennifer Brooks, Welland, Ont., Kay Chetley Diaries [hereafter KCD], 20 January 1936.

<sup>26</sup>KCD, 21 January 1936.

<sup>27</sup>KCD, 22 January 1936.

<sup>28</sup>KCD, 26 January 1936.

<sup>29</sup>KCD, 28 January 1936.



from about 10 feet at 7 pm. Wonderful. Then dashed down to park to see them on Brock balcony. Back to Victoria Ave. where we saw them again at 10. Awfully tired but it was worth it."<sup>30</sup>

Such excitement over a royal visit and concern over the death of a king corresponded to the sentiments of the broader Welland community. In both instances, royal news displaced almost all other world and local events in the newspaper. The death of the King provides a prime example. The weakening condition of the King, his doctors' efforts, his death, the funeral, the proclamation of the new King, all became headline news, accompanied by detailed and lengthy reports. So too did the related activities of the municipal government and local churches and societies. For example, various articles reported that all churches prayed for the King's recovery, that upon his death the city council draped the City Hall in Welland, and that several members of the Daughters of the Empire fainted at their own memorial tribute to the King.<sup>31</sup> The Memorial service at the Capitol movie theatre which Kay attended was filled to capacity. Local ministers directed the services, memorializing the King as a "friend of man" and reminding the audience that despite the loss of one friend of the "British Empire and the World," they still had "that friend above all others, the Saviour, invisible yet ever potent in the lives of men."<sup>32</sup>

Although the overwhelming emphasis on monarchy which appeared in early 1936 and again with the royal visit in 1939 was unique, references to Anglo values and ideals dot the editorials and articles of the *Welland Tribune*. One editorial, for example, noted the importance of increasing the Canadian-born population, "the best human stock in the world," to avoid being "overrun with low-class aliens" as in the United States. In Canada, the editor continued, the "Anglo-Saxon strain is dominant" and "our aliens are from the better class of European emigrants."<sup>33</sup> They were regarded as good citizens "because of their loyalty to British institutions, following their arrival in Canada, their thrift and their peace-loving habits...."<sup>34</sup> Indeed, editorials conflated the British Empire with "peace and the improvement of the lot of mankind."<sup>35</sup> And they advocated the importance of Empire Day, when "boys and girls of every creed and color are taught the principles of patriotic devotion, the high character of their privilege as citizens of the British Empire and their own individual responsibility in keeping the Empire great and efficacious in the midst of alarms."<sup>36</sup>

<sup>30</sup>KCD, 7 June 1939.

<sup>31</sup>See *Welland - Port Colborne Evening Tribune* [hereafter *Tribune*] 18 January to 22 January 1936. For the royal visit see *Tribune*, 22 May 1939 to 9 June 1939.

<sup>32</sup>"More Than 1,500 At Service in Welland," *Tribune*, 28 January 1936.

<sup>33</sup>"Overcrowded Schools," *Tribune*, 3 Sept. 1936.

<sup>34</sup>"Loyal to Canada," *Tribune*, 9 May 1935.

<sup>35</sup>"British Empire Solidarity," *Tribune*, 8 May 1935. See also, "The King's Broadcast," *Tribune*, 2 March 1936.

<sup>36</sup>"A Significant Empire Day," *Tribune*, 23 May 1939.

For the Anglo-Canadian working class, the British Empire and adherence to its values connoted a degree of respectability. So too did church attendance and membership.<sup>37</sup> Kay's diaries reveal aspects not only of her Loyalist heritage, but also of her Protestant upbringing. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries Baptists formed the largest Protestant denomination in New Brunswick, the province of Kay's birth and childhood. In Ontario only a minority of the population adhered to the Baptist faith.<sup>38</sup> Yet in Welland, Baptists had established roots in the community early on, erecting one of the first church buildings.<sup>39</sup> After the family moved to Welland, Mrs. Chetley quickly became a leader within the Baptist community, hosting Ladies' Aid and Mission Circle meetings in her home.<sup>40</sup> Kay usually attended church three to four times a week. She typically went to church twice on Sunday, often attending Sunday School before the morning service. She attended weekly Baptist Youth meetings on Monday night, often went to class meetings or mission circle, and was a member of the choir.<sup>41</sup>

First Church, Welland, to which Kay and her family belonged, was part of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec. Almost no literature exists on the history of this Convention for the first half of the 20th century.<sup>42</sup> As a result we know little of the moral and social attitudes and beliefs of Ontario Convention Baptists, other than the general prohibitions adhered to by all evangelicals against such things as dancing, card-playing, going to the movies, or drinking. Historians have noted the continuing influence of evangelical beliefs and values within working-class communities well into the 20th century.<sup>43</sup> At the same time, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries North American Protestantism was significantly re-

<sup>37</sup> Knowles, "Christ in the Crowsnest," 60.

<sup>38</sup> In 1911, for example, Baptists comprised 39.8 per cent of the Protestant population in New Brunswick but only 6.6 per cent in Ontario. See Brian Clarke, "English-Speaking Canada From 1854," in Terrence Murphy and Roberto Perin, eds., *A Concise History of Christianity in Canada* (Toronto 1996), 263.

<sup>39</sup> Lewis, *Aqueduct, Merrittsville and Welland*, 101. By 1936 the church had 227 members. See *Canadian Baptist*, 30 January 1936.

<sup>40</sup> In September 1934, for example, she hosted a meeting of both groups so they could express their appreciation for the work of Mrs. Norton, wife of the pastor of Rosedale Mission. See *Canadian Baptist*, 23 October 1934.

<sup>41</sup> The class meeting engaged in such events as sewing and quilting for the Christmas charity box and held social events such as an annual banquet. KCD, 13 November 1934, 18 October 1935, 23 October 1936.

<sup>42</sup> The convention was formed in 1888. For the institutional development of the Baptist denomination in Canada see Harry A. Renfree, *Heritage and Horizon: The Baptist Story in Canada* (Mississauga 1988) and J. Zemon, ed., *Baptists in Canada* (Burlington 1980).

<sup>43</sup> Christie and Gauvreau, "'The World of the Common Man Is Filled with Religious Fer-vour,'" 337-50.

shaped by the liberal theology of the Social Gospel movement.<sup>44</sup> This movement influenced at least a minority within the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec.<sup>45</sup> Remaining within their heritage, these Baptists, Richard Allen argues, were oriented towards the conservative wing of the Social Gospel, “emphasizing personal-ethical issues, tending to identify sin with individual acts, and taking as their social strategy legislative reform of the environment.”<sup>46</sup>

An examination of the Convention’s annual reports and its newspaper, the *Canadian Baptist*, confirms the existence of a more conservative moral, social, and political environment. Resolutions emerging out of the annual convention, for example, indicate that Baptists supported the work of the Lord’s Day Alliance to protect the Sabbath, opposed gambling or the use of lotteries to raise money, and strongly supported temperance.<sup>47</sup> In 1934 several editorials appeared in the *Canadian Baptist* opposing the introduction of a Liquor Control Bill that proposed to reduce restrictions on the sale and advertising of beer.<sup>48</sup> The paper also reported on the charitable activities of the denomination, and the work of missions and how they were faring. In 1937, however, the Convention endorsed policies such as collective bargaining, unemployment insurance, and the minimum wage.<sup>49</sup> Thus while, as Richard Allen has argued, the Convention focused significantly on personal-ethical issues, Baptists were also coming to support central planks in what would become the post-war welfare state.

The extent to which the members of First Church supported the resolutions of the Convention is unknown.<sup>50</sup> Certainly, they provided contributions to Baptist

<sup>44</sup>Social Gospellers placed as great emphasis on the historical life of Jesus and the implications His life had for social and economic improvement on earth, as they did on His supernatural nature. Richard Allen, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada, 1914-28* (Toronto 1971).

<sup>45</sup>George A. Rawlyk, “The Champions of the Oppressed? Canadian Baptists and Social, Political and Economic Realities,” in Robert E. VanderVennen, ed., *Church and Canadian Culture* (Lanham 1991), 109. Eric Crouse has identified a strong “social evangelicalism” emerging in the 1930s in the pages of the *Maritime Baptist*, the organ of the United Baptist Convention of the Maritimes. See “Capitalism Under Fire: Voices of Baptist Social Protest in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia During the Great Depression,” *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society*, 1 (Spring 2001), 39-56.

<sup>46</sup>Allen, *The Social Passion*, 17.

<sup>47</sup>See for example *Baptist Year Book 1937* for Ontario, Quebec, and Western Canada; *Baptist Year Book 1941* for Ontario, Quebec, and Western Canada; *Baptist Year Book 1942-43* for the Convention of Ontario and Quebec.

<sup>48</sup>For example, “Beer,” *Canadian Baptist*, 1 February 1934; “More Beer,” *Canadian Baptist*, 29 March 1934.

<sup>49</sup>*Baptist Year Book 1937* for Ontario, Quebec and Western Canada. See also *Baptist Year Book 1940* for Ontario, Quebec and Western Canada, and Grant, *Church in the Canadian Era*, 146.

<sup>50</sup>I have been unable to gain access to the few records that exist for First Church.

missions and to special funds such as relief for Saskatchewan.<sup>51</sup> First Church also provided its members with a strong community network, sponsoring a host of voluntary groups.<sup>52</sup> It held rallies in conjunction with other convention Baptists to support, and make known the work of, missionary societies, Sunday Schools, and the Baptist Young People's Union.<sup>53</sup> As in other churches, such activities helped attract and maintain members, reinforce church messages and standards, and provide alternatives to less wholesome entertainment.<sup>54</sup>

There was at least some interaction between First Church, the local Baptist mission (Rosedale), and the Welland Hungarian Baptist Church. New pastors to one church would be welcomed by representatives of the other churches.<sup>55</sup> And there is evidence, during the period under consideration, of at least one Easter communion service held in common. In 1940, for example, the Rosedale and Hungarian churches joined First Church in service. The pastors from all three churches helped lead the service and there was even a prayer in Hungarian.<sup>56</sup>

However, such instances of rapprochement between British and non-British immigrants do not seem to have been common. Attitudes of British superiority can be found not only in the local Welland newspaper, but also in the *Canadian Baptist*. A 1934 editorial on the importance of Home Missions, for example, stated of settlers in northern Ontario that many were "from non-English lands, who need to be Christianized and nationalized." Similarly, in regard to settlers in the west, the editorial stated rather awkwardly, "[f]oreign speaking are many of these — needing the Gospel message more, if such a thing is possible, than any others."<sup>57</sup>

Kay lived not only in an Anglo and Baptist community, but one that was feeling the effects of the Depression. A significant number of Wellanders found them-

<sup>51</sup> *Baptist Year Book* 1934 for Ontario, Quebec, and Western Canada.

<sup>52</sup> Voluntary groups included Ladies' Aid, Women's Mission Circle, Young Women's Mission Circle, the Baptist Young People's Union (BYPU), Sunday School, Choir, Mission Band, as well as administrative committees such as the Deacons' Board, Trustees' Board, and Finance Committee. See *Canadian Baptist*, 30 January 1936.

<sup>53</sup> *Canadian Baptist*, 5 November 1936; *Canadian Baptist*, 1 November 1939; *Canadian Baptist*, 15 November 1944.

<sup>54</sup> For such efforts elsewhere in Canada see Knowles, "Christ in the Crowsnest," 64.

<sup>55</sup> "Reception To Welland Hungarian Minister," *Canadian Baptist*, 23 August 1934; *Canadian Baptist*, 20-27 July 1939. A minister for the Welland Hungarian Church, Rev. A. Boda, arrived in 1934 from Cleveland. His salary was funded in part through a student salary paid by the Home Mission Board and in part by a local manufacturer who agreed to allow Boda to work a half-week in his factory for ten hours a day at 30 cents an hour. See "Reception To Welland Hungarian Minister," *Canadian Baptist*, 23 August 1934.

<sup>56</sup> *Canadian Baptist*, 1 May 1940.

<sup>57</sup> "Passing of Home Missions," *Canadian Baptist*, 10 May 1934. This combination of nativist sentiment and a desire to "Canadianize" non-British immigrants was not uncommon among Protestant churches. For a slightly earlier period see Knowles, "Christ in the Crowsnest," 60.

selves on relief.<sup>58</sup> As a result, the city, like other municipalities, all of which bore the burden of relief payments, found itself struggling financially.<sup>59</sup> Support for relief programs was often conditional on them being provided to the “deserving.” Editorials, which generally recognized the need for relief programs, decried payments to “the lazy,” to those perceived to be taking advantage of relief funds, to panhandling “opportunists,” or to “wanderers” seeking aid from the community.<sup>60</sup> Similar responses appear with respect to local strikes. In 1935, for example, the newspaper provided extensive coverage of the Crowland relief strike and more limited coverage of strikes at Page-Hersey and Cotton Mills.<sup>61</sup> In these strikes both the unemployed and the employed, organized themselves for strike action and created their own unions to fight for relief or better wages.<sup>62</sup> Editorials again supported only action perceived as “responsible.” Rejection of “reasonable concessions,” “defiant attitudes” on the part of strikers, or the appearance of “professional agitators,” all came under attack as irresponsible on the part of workers.<sup>63</sup>

Kay lived and worked in this setting. She could not have been unaware of the consequences of the Depression. As noted earlier, financial constraints forced her to delay marriage, and the household budget would have been tight with a husband who worked limited days. Yet she did not undergo the hardships of many others. Neither she nor anyone in her extended family experienced unemployment. Peter Archibald has discovered for nearby Hamilton that while many workers did face

<sup>58</sup>In the first half of the 1930s anywhere from 5 to 14 per cent of the population in Welland found themselves unemployed or on relief. According to the Census of Canada, the unemployment rate in Welland in 1931 was 6.4 per cent. See *Labour Gazette*, July 1932, 787. Relief figures for February 1935, 14 per cent; August 1935, 10 per cent; February 1936, 11 per cent; August 1936, 5.4 per cent. The reduction from 11 per cent to 5.4 per cent may be due in part to the removal of single men from relief rolls as of May 1936. See “Welfare Board is to Probe All Families Getting Relief,” *Tribune*, 20 March 1936; “Relief figures show reduction,” *Tribune*, 14 September 1936. [Percentages are based on the population rate provided in the 1931 Census of Canada.]

<sup>59</sup>“Aldermen Favor Direct Relief,” *Tribune*, 12 September 1931; “Welland Deficit Wiped Out, Surplus Now Shows,” *Tribune*, 15 January 1936; H.M. Cassidy, *Unemployment and Relief in Ontario, 1929-1932* (Toronto 1932), 120-8; Thompson and Seager, *Canada, 1922-1939*, 211.

<sup>60</sup>“Meeting the Unemployment Situation,” *Tribune*, 14 September 1931; “Misdirected Sympathy,” *Tribune*, 25 January 1936; “War on Relief Chiselers,” *Tribune*, 6 February 1936; “Offensive Panhandlers,” *Tribune*, 16 June 1936.

<sup>61</sup>*Tribune*, April-May 1935, September-October 1935, December 1935-January 1936. Like Kay’s diary, the local paper generally provides only brief glimpses into the effects of the Depression. The paper focused primarily on national, international, and sports news.

<sup>62</sup>In the case of the latter two strikes, workers struck independently of organized labour. See Rev. Fern A. Sayles, *Welland Workers Make History* (Welland 1963), 124-43.

<sup>63</sup>“Truce in Crowland,” *Tribune*, 29 April 1935; “Reasonable Concessions,” *Tribune*, 10 May 1935; “Rocking the Boat,” *Tribune*, 9 April 1936.

deprivation and distress during the Depression, the majority did not.<sup>64</sup> Unskilled or semi-skilled members of the working class were hit hardest by the effects of the Depression. Skilled workers fared better.<sup>65</sup> According to the Rowell-Sirois Commission, employed wage-earners generally "suffered no reductions in real income," while skilled workers saw an "improvement in their real wages."<sup>66</sup> Bryan Palmer reminds us that the 1920s witnessed an increase in consumer purchasing power, while in the 1930s price declines surpassed wage cuts. For some employed workers this translated into an increase in real wages.<sup>67</sup> This is not to say that skilled workers no longer had to struggle to make ends meet. Indeed, historians have found that during the interwar years these workers often lived on the edge of the poverty line.<sup>68</sup> In Hamilton, for example, although most employed workers were able to hold on to their jobs, they often worked only a couple of days a week.<sup>69</sup> And most people came to fear unemployment.<sup>70</sup> Still, Kay, like at least some others, lived within a network of families who could not only provide food and shelter for themselves, but at the end of the week had a little money left over. Indeed, some conspicuous consumption was possible. Canadians as a whole owned more radios, fridges, and cars at the end of the 1930s than they had ten years before.<sup>71</sup> So too were members of the working-class participating in growing numbers in commercialized forms of leisure.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Archibald, "Distress, Dissent and Alienation," 4.

<sup>65</sup> Cassidy, *Unemployment and Relief*, 39; Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own*, 153-5; Archibald, "Distress, Dissent, and Alienation," 11.

<sup>66</sup> Donald V. Smiley, ed. *The Rowell-Sirois Report, Book I* (Toronto 1963), 148.

<sup>67</sup> Bryan D. Palmer, *Working-Class Experience: Rethinking the History of Canadian Labour, 1800-1991* (Toronto 1992), 233.

<sup>68</sup> Baillargeon, *Making Do*, 26; Piva, *The Condition of the Working Class in Toronto, 1900-1921*, 36-8; Terry Copp, *The Anatomy of Poverty: The Condition of the Working-Class in Montreal, 1897-1929* (Toronto 1974), 40-1.

<sup>69</sup> Archibald, "Distress, Dissent and Alienation," 4.

<sup>70</sup> With an unemployment rate of somewhere between 26 and 35 per cent in 1933, most working-class people would have known someone who was unemployed or on relief. See Horn, *Dirty Thirties*, 10. In nearby Hamilton, for example, male unemployment reached 30 per cent in 1931. Partly as a result, in Hamilton most workers did not participate in strikes or the political protests of the unemployed. Archibald, "Distress, Dissent and Alienation," 4, 6. Fear of unemployment also affected American families. See Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life* (New York 1988), 135-6.

<sup>71</sup> Mintz and Kellogg, *Domestic Revolutions*, 258.

<sup>72</sup> Historians have noted the way in which a new culture of consumption began to change class- and ethnic-based alliances as well as notions of respectability. Some historians see this participation in mass culture as an erosion of class-based and ethnic cultures. See for example, Palmer, *Working-Class Experience*, 229-36, and Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York 1999), chapter 5. Morton argues that among the working class in

Kay, as we will see, participated in this emerging culture of mass consumption, buying domestic goods, going to movies and local amusement parks, as well as taking short trips.

There were many dimensions to the working-class community in and around Welland. Carmela Patrias has written eloquently about the radical immigrant working-class community in Crowland township, which suffered particularly from the effects of unemployment and erupted in the Relief Strike of 1935.<sup>73</sup> Other workers in the Welland/Crowland area also struck for better wages, created their own unions, and, by the 1940s, invited organized labour into their plants and factories.<sup>74</sup> Kay's diaries, however, do not reveal any participation in or allegiance to these other communities. Rather, hers was a community rooted in religious respectability, in an emerging consumer culture, and in the order and stability promised by the British Empire.

### *Harry's Background*

The Baptist and Anglo community of Depression Welland thus provides the backdrop for the activities of the Chetley family. Indeed, family life revolved around First Church. And, considering that Kay was at First Church three to four times a week, it is perhaps not surprising that she met her future husband, Harry, through church activities. When Kay and her family arrived in Welland in 1924, Harry and his family already belonged to the local Baptist community. Harry's parents, James Henry and Hanna, had arrived in Welland from South Shields, England, in the first decade of the 20th century.<sup>75</sup> In England they had attended the Anglican church, but once settled in Welland, they attended the Baptist church as it was closer to where the family lived. Upon arrival in Welland, James Henry found work as an assistant baker. The family was large — with five children by 1925 — and poor. As a result, Harry, the oldest child in the family, had to quit school after completing grade nine to help support the family. While school-leaving age was legally sixteen, Harry, like many working-class children of the time, received a special exemption in order to join the full-time workforce and contribute to the survival of the family.<sup>76</sup>

1920s Halifax, notions of status based on consumption came to co-exist alongside older ideals based on respectability or behaviour. See *Ideal Surroundings*, 44-50.

<sup>73</sup>Patrias, *Relief Strike*.

<sup>74</sup>Sayles, *Welland Workers Make History*, 124-46.

<sup>75</sup>James Henry emigrated to Welland on his own and several years later, after he was settled, sent for Hanna. They married in Welland. Interview, Jennifer Brooks, 31 March 2001.

<sup>76</sup>Craig Heron, "The High School and the Household Economy in Working-Class Hamilton, 1890-1940," *Historical Studies in Education*, 7 (Fall 1995), 240, 249-50. It is unknown how much of Harry's paycheque went to the family. Susan Porter Benson argues that sons usually turned over a portion of their paycheque but rarely all of it. See "Gender, Generation, and Consumption in the United States: Working-Class Families in the Interwar Period," in Susan Strasser *et al.*, eds., *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge 1998), 228.

Whereas Kay's parents could afford to allow both their girls to finish high school, most of James Henry and Hanna's children left school before finishing grade ten.<sup>77</sup>

Though Harry had less education than Kay and came from a lower socio-economic background, by the time he met and became engaged to her, he had joined her father as a member of the artisan class. Harry apprenticed as a moulder and eventually found work at Welland Iron and Brass, a foundry established in 1918 as part of the industrial expansion resulting from World War I. It produced "grey-iron and non-ferrous castings."<sup>78</sup> This was a trade which placed him economically near the top of the category of skilled workers.<sup>79</sup> Labour historians have argued for the 19th century that moulders, because of their skills, were able to maintain a degree of control over their workplace. While capitalists would make significant gains in their control over the shop-floor within industries in Toronto and Hamilton in the early 20th century, moulding remained, at least in smaller companies, skilled work.<sup>80</sup> Welland Iron and Brass, like other small foundries, was mainly engaged in custom work – for example, small production runs of specialty castings for other manufacturers, or "one-off" castings to supply a machine part or fixture for a lake boat undergoing a refit or repair. The critical workers in such tasks were the highly skilled carpenters to make the patterns and the moulders responsible for pouring metal, ensuring its quality for the job at hand, understanding the nature of alloys, knowing the tolerances of the moulds, and the like. The traditional artisanal culture of moulders included a work ethic of independence in the workplace, self-reliance, and a respectability and dignity arising from the skill of their trade. Particularly in the larger foundries, much of this culture had eroded by the 1920s.<sup>81</sup> However, remnants of artisanal values and craft pride remained. Indeed, it was not unusual at places like Welland Iron and Brass to demonstrate pride in one's skill by moulding iron into finely crafted objects such as crocodile-shaped nutcrackers and fireplace irons.

<sup>77</sup> Most of the other children also left school in their mid-teens and found employment in order to help support the family financially. Interview with Kay's sister-in-law, Vera Gorham, 12 December 2001.

<sup>78</sup> Jackson, *The Welland Canals and Their Communities*, 344.

<sup>79</sup> Michael J. Piva, *The Condition of the Working Class in Toronto, 1900-1921* (Ottawa 1979), 34-5; Craig Heron, "Factory Workers," in Paul Craven, ed., *Labouring Lives: Work and Workers in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto 1995), 528-30.

<sup>80</sup> Gregory S. Kealey, *Toronto Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism, 1867-1892* (Toronto 1980), 64-77. See also Craig Heron, "The Crisis of the Craftsman: Hamilton's Metal Workers in the Early Twentieth Century," *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 6 (Autumn 1980), 47, and Wayne Roberts, "Toronto Metal Workers and the Second Industrial Revolution, 1889-1914," *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 6 (Autumn 1980), 50.

<sup>81</sup> Heron, "The Crisis of the Craftsman," 8; Roberts, "Toronto Metal Workers and the Second Industrial Revolution," 55.



### *Courtship*

When Kay's diaries begin, her courtship with Harry was already under way. Historians disagree over the historical patterns of courtship. With the growth of urban spaces, some see 20th-century courtship as a more private affair compared to the supervised setting of the family parlour in the 19th century.<sup>82</sup> Others see 20th-century courtship continuing to remain close to home or chaperoned by community members.<sup>83</sup> Still others argue that despite family and community strictures, young men and women had in the 19th century been able to find private spaces in public arenas such as at work, on walks, or on buggy rides to church, and they continued to do so in the 20th century, incorporating new venues like the dance hall or movie theatre into their courtship rituals.<sup>84</sup> As we will see, in 1930s Welland Kay and Harry experienced both public and private, supervised and unsupervised, patterns of courtship.

Given their church connections it is not surprising that many of Kay and Harry's activities together revolved around church activities. Both Kay and Harry were involved in the Baptist Young People's Union (BYPU) and sat on its executive.<sup>85</sup> The BYPU, or as Kay referred to it, Baptist Youth, had been established within the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec in the late 1890s.<sup>86</sup> The Welland BYPU combined theological or religious discussion with a variety of socials. It opened yearly with a banquet at which members divided into groups. At the weekly meetings one group would present papers on a topic that all the members would then discuss as well as taking responsibility for directing the meeting, which often included a song service, devotionals, a guest speaker, or a business meeting, in addition to the core activity.<sup>87</sup> In the course of such meetings, these young people, many of whom had limited formal schooling, furthered their education, learning the skills of running business meetings, public speaking, reading and writing, and critical analysis. What each individual got out of these meetings is, of course, difficult to know. Kay rarely recorded details about them except to mention that at times she found them tiresome. In 1934 she wrote, "seems like waste of an hour but

<sup>82</sup>Peter Ward, *Courtship, Love, and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century English Canada* (Montréal and Kingston 1990), 5, 65-6, 86. For the United States see Beth Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat: Courtship in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore 1988), 3, 13.

<sup>83</sup>Strong-Boag, *New Day Recalled*, 84.

<sup>84</sup>Karen Dubinsky, *Improper Advances: Rape and Heterosexual Conflict in Ontario, 1880-1929* (Chicago 1993), 116-7; Baillargeon, *Making Do*, 48; Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks*, 176.

<sup>85</sup>KCD, 3 September 1935.

<sup>86</sup>Renfree, *Heritage and Horizon*, 203.

<sup>87</sup>KCD, 9 September 1935. Papers were delivered on topics such as "Our Hopes for 1936" or "Stoning the Prophets." See "BYPU Meeting," *Tribune*, 8 January 1936 and 11 February 1936.

I will hope for better things"; in 1935, "BY topic on alcohol rather dumb"; and again in 1937 "our topic and [it was] terrible."<sup>88</sup>

Just why Kay continued to attend Baptist Youth is unclear. It may have been due to community expectations, but a more likely explanation is that Baptist Youth provided an important social milieu. Lynne Marks has argued that in the late 19th century churchgoing provided "a social outlet for the respectable folk of small-town Ontario," as "did the many church-sponsored activities, including concerts, lectures, picnics, and socials."<sup>89</sup> The BYPU provided a similar function for young Baptists. The group sponsored such activities as Valentine's Day parties, Christmas pageants, picnics, and wiener roasts, often held at local spots such as Grimsby Beach, Nickel Plant Beach, and the Niagara Glen.<sup>90</sup> The Welland Baptist Youth also frequently met with other Baptist groups in the Niagara area. In February 1935, for example, they attended a skating party at Grimsby followed by a lunch hosted by the Grimsby Baptist Youth. In May, the Welland Baptist Youth returned the invitation, hosting the Grimsby youth group for the evening.<sup>91</sup> Such meetings provided young Baptist men and women with a chance to socialize in a semi-supervised environment and to meet future partners.

While church was a central place for courtship, so too was the home. Much of Kay and Harry's courtship continued to occur in the traditional 19th-century setting of the family living-room. "Sitting up" was a "common custom leading to engagement," Peter Ward argues for the 19th century, and once the family "considered the suitor a possible marriage partner" they would provide the couple with increasing degrees of privacy.<sup>92</sup> Kay's diary entries reveal that she and Harry regularly stayed up chatting until eleven or twelve at night, well after the rest of the family had gone to bed. While most of these discussions remain unrecorded, it is clear that at least a few involved long talks about their future goals and their compatibility. As Kay wrote, "Had a nice long talk (till 1 AM) re the ability to get along and such weighty matters. Decided in the affirmative."<sup>93</sup> Moreover, on occasion they had the house to themselves, an event that Kay would note in her diary. Concerns over compatibility mark not only the belief in marriage as a life-long commitment but the emergence in the late 19th and early 20th centuries of the "companionate family" where mar-

<sup>88</sup>KCD, 12 November 1934, 21 October 1935, 5 April 1937. See also 2 December 1935, 15 March 1937. Although Kay only mentioned a few times that she found meetings tiresome, neither did she leave a record of any meetings she enjoyed.

<sup>89</sup>Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks*, 23.

<sup>90</sup>KCD, 27 June 1936, 6 July 1936, 28 June 1937, 7 August 1937, 25 July 1938.

<sup>91</sup>KCD, 28 February and 20 May 1935. Many other examples of such visits exist in the diaries. For example, the BYPU of First Baptist, Welland visited the BYPU group in Wainfleet on 17 April 1935 and in Port Colborne on 7 March 1938. Port Colborne BYPU visited the Welland BYPU on 11 May 1936 followed by the Dunnville BYPU on 1 March 1937.

<sup>92</sup>Ward, *Courtship, Love, and Marriage*, 102.

<sup>93</sup>KCD, 16 November 1934.

riage was no longer an economic enterprise but would offer “emotional and sexual fulfillment.”<sup>94</sup>

While Kay and Harry’s courtship continued to occur within the home, it also occurred in public spaces. Like previous generations, Kay and Harry spent much of their courtship in strolling about town. However, unlike half a century earlier, when couples would have been accompanied by friends and relatives, Kay and Harry walked unsupervised. For example, Harry would walk Kay to choir practice or pick her up and walk her home after it was finished. They would frequently stroll about town, often stopping at the library to pick up some books for the coming week. The canal also offered opportunity for entertainment. Occasionally in winter Kay and Harry went skating or skiing on the canal, while in the summer they tried out canoeing.<sup>95</sup> In these settings they achieved a degree of freedom from familial supervision.

It is sometimes noted, as Peter Ward does for the 19th century, that because activities occurred in open view, couples came under a wider form of community supervision.<sup>96</sup> This may be true in many instances. Yet as G.M. Trevelyn demonstrated decades ago, historians need to pay attention to the geography of their territory. In the case of Kay and Harry, approximately half an hour’s walk separated their homes as well as their church from Kay’s home. The walk entailed a lift-bridge over the canal and the grassy banks on either side, side streets and paths that ran along the river bank, and “the island,” a long stretch of wasteland that separated the canal and the river. There was no shortage of places in central Welland where some degree of privacy could be found. And, as at least a later generation informs me, the lift-bridge (sometimes up for two or three boats at a time) was always a plausible excuse for arriving home later than promised. Whether or not Kay and Harry used these opportunities is not recorded; but certainly they existed.

Kay and Harry also had access to new sites of commercialized leisure which had been emerging in urban centres since the late 19th century. During their courtship, for example, they often went to the movies. On a special occasion they would treat themselves to ice cream or go to Eaton’s for a soda.<sup>97</sup> They would also walk

<sup>94</sup>Mintz and Kellogg, *Domestic Revolutions*, 113-5.

<sup>95</sup>KCD, 29 May 1935, 15 November 1935. For library use see 4 July 1935, 19 July 1935, 13 December 1935. For skating see 19 January 1935. For skiing see 26 January 1935, 9 February 1935, 23 February 1935, 8 February 1936. For canoeing see 29 June 1935. Promenades were a frequent activity of courting couples in 19th-century Canada, particularly because it was inexpensive. Ward, *Courtship, Love, and Marriage*, 91. In Britain such outings were regular features of working-class courtship rituals well into the 20th century. See John R. Gillis, *For Better, For Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present* (Oxford 1985), 271-2.

<sup>96</sup>Ward, *Courtship, Love, and Marriage*, 100.

<sup>97</sup>In 1935, for example, they saw at least eighteen movies. For the reference to ice cream see KCD, 25 March 1935, 27 August 1935, 13 April 1936, 21 June 1936. For sodas see 28 June 1935, 19 July 1935, 19 June 1936, 14 August 1936.

downtown and window shop. They took occasional day trips to Niagara Falls, to Saint Catharines for an afternoon of shopping, or to Crystal Beach or Port Dalhousie, local lakeside resorts that offered picnic and bathing facilities as well as amusement rides and games. These resorts also had dancing pavilions,<sup>98</sup> and on some of these occasions they put on their dancing shoes. They had taken a couple of dancing lessons in February 1935 and subsequently began trying out those lessons at home.<sup>99</sup> They also had the opportunity to put their lessons to the test at the lakeside resorts. At Port Dalhousie, for example, park management engaged a dance band Monday to Saturday evenings from eight to twelve and from one to four in the afternoon on Wednesdays and Saturdays.<sup>100</sup> Such trips, like those they took with the church, were made possible due to the extensive transportation network in the Niagara Peninsula. The electric streetcar, run by the Niagara, Saint Catharines, and Thorold (NS&T) carried passengers and freight between the various canal communities. With hourly service, Kay and Harry could easily reach the major centres: Saint Catharines, Niagara Falls, Port Dalhousie, Fonthill, and Port Colborne.<sup>101</sup>

They went dancing? Baptists, like many of the moral reformers of the time, disapproved of such new leisure activities of youth as dancing, going to the movies, or hanging out on downtown streets. Indeed, such activities contributed to a moral panic in the early 20th century about the state of Canadian youth.<sup>102</sup> These new sites allowed Kay and Harry, like many other young people, opportunity to escape parental and community supervision and strictures. Once away from Welland, for example, Kay and Harry may well have felt more comfortable flouting Baptist strictures against dancing. Moreover, through consumption, be it in the form of movie-going, window shopping, or hanging out at Eaton's, Kay, in particular, gained legitimate and respectable access to the public realm, an area less available

<sup>98</sup>For the Falls see KCD, 22 June 1935, 12 October 1935. For Saint Catharines see 7 December 1935. For Crystal Beach see 6 July 1935, 24 August 1935. For the increasing popularity of commercialized leisure sites among the working class see Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem*, 118-24. For the United States see Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920* (Cambridge 1983), chapter 7; Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure*, chapter 5.

<sup>99</sup>KCD, 22 February 1935, 25 February 1935, 5 March 1935, 11 April 1935, 8 June 1935.

<sup>100</sup>Dorothy Turcotte, *Shoes and Ships and Sealing Wax: Port Dalhousie* (Erin 1986), 36-9, 43; Jackson, *The Welland Canals and Their Communities*, 328.

<sup>101</sup>With the increasing availability of buses and automobiles, railroad service contracted after World War Two and ended in 1959. See Jackson, *The Canals and their Communities*, 309-10.

<sup>102</sup>For concerns about single female workers' use of leisure time see Carolyn Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem*, 118-27. For the concern about the morality of youth more generally, see for example, Cynthia Comacchio, "Dancing to Perdition: Adolescence and Leisure in Interwar English Canada," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 32 (Fall 1997), 5, 12-3; Robert M. Stamp, "Canadian High Schools in the 1920's and 1930's: The Social Challenge to the Academic Tradition," *Canadian Historical Association Historical Papers* (1978), 76, 79.

to previous generations of young women. Nan Enstad reminds us, "the consumer gaze legitimated women's presence in public spaces on a daily, informal basis, altering entrenched gendered patterns of mobility."<sup>103</sup> These new patterns, however, co-existed with older ones. Historians have pointed to the way in which new leisure activities of the 19th and 20th centuries could draw people away from the churches.<sup>104</sup> In this particular case, however, Kay and Harry seem to have had little difficulty in reconciling new leisure pursuits with their religious commitments. They thus incorporated new patterns of heterosocialization into older ones, creating new courtship rituals for themselves.

### *Engagement and Honeymoon*

Through church activities, as well as through more secular entertainment, Kay and Harry gradually cemented their relationship. Their engagement resulted in a number of changes to their activities. On the night of 27 July 1935 Harry and Kay went to Hamilton, where Harry bought Kay a diamond ring. "Was I thrilled," Kay wrote in her diary that night.<sup>105</sup> Throughout the next year the couple periodically priced furniture for their future apartment or house. Insights into the buying power of everyday Canadians are few and far between. Joy Parr has shown that in the 1940s and 1950s, working people chose their furniture carefully according to their own values rather than those of the market.<sup>106</sup> A similar pattern is revealed in Kay's diaries. Kay and Harry went to a series of local furniture stores such as Leon's and Hilder's, pricing chairs, chesterfields, mattresses, and other such items.<sup>107</sup> Searching for, and buying, large items became part of their outings. As Kay wrote on 9 May 1936, "Worked in morning. We bought our bedroom suite in afternoon and went to Buffalo on 4 bus." In Buffalo they walked around, went for dinner, took in a show, and caught the 11:30 p.m. bus home.<sup>108</sup> In June they began looking at apartments and houses, finding it difficult to find one they liked. Finally, at the end of August, al-

<sup>103</sup>Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure*, 182. On the creation of the department store as a respectable public site for middle-class women see Cynthia Wright, "'Feminine Trifles of Vast Importance': Writing Gender into the History of Consumption," in Franca Iacovetta and Mariana Valverde, *Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women's History* (Toronto 1992), 248-9. For the United States see William Leach, "Transformations in a Culture of Consumption: Women and Department Stores, 1890-1925," *Journal of American History*, 71 (September 1984), 319-42.

<sup>104</sup>Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks*, 218; David Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith: Canadian Protestant Clergy and the Crisis of Belief, 1850-1940* (Toronto 1992), 24.

<sup>105</sup>KCD, 27 July 1935. Kay received the diamond on the 31st of July 1935 but wore it to work for the first time only in September.

<sup>106</sup>Joy Parr, "Household Choices as Politics and Pleasure in 1950s Canada," *International Labor and Working Class History*, 55 (Spring 1999), 127.

<sup>107</sup>KCD, 19 October 1935, 1 August 1936.

<sup>108</sup>KCD, 9 May 1936.

most in despair of finding appropriate accommodation, they rented a small house in a working-class neighbourhood which was moderately prosperous and predominantly Anglo-Canadian.<sup>109</sup>

Preparations for the wedding began in July 1936. Near the end of that month Kay and Harry took the train to Toronto. They went to Birks and bought a wedding ring and then Kay and her sister, Roberta, who happened to be in Toronto, shopped for, as Kay recorded, "all my lingerie." In early August, Kay and Roberta ordered their dresses from a shop in downtown Welland and Kay's mother made the wedding cake, though for good luck Kay "stirred it 100 times." In mid-August Kay and Harry travelled to Saint Catharines in order to obtain their marriage licence. Near the end of August the Class Meeting and Mission Circle held a shower for Kay.<sup>110</sup> Finally, two days before the wedding, Kay hosted afternoon tea for female family and friends. This kind of trousseau tea was a regular event in the community. It was usually held about a week before the wedding and consisted of a display of the things that had been carefully collected in the hope chest of the bride-to-be. Articles such as tablecloths, tea-towels, quilts, and lingerie — which the bride had made herself or received as gifts — were laid out to be admired by the guests.<sup>111</sup> Both before and after the wedding Kay received presents from groups of people with whom she was associated. Generally, acquaintances combined their money to give the couple presents. For example, Kay received a set of pots and pans from the "girls at office," candlesticks and a bedspread from the Baptist Youth, and an end table from the church choir.<sup>112</sup>

A small house wedding was held at Kay's parents' home on Saturday, 5 September 1936.<sup>113</sup> Kay wore a brown velvet dress with brown and blue lace while her sister, the attendant, wore a wine-coloured dress. Kay's dress was typical for the interwar years. Examining working-class weddings in Halifax in the 1920s, Suzanne Morton has found that, after June, September was the second most popular

<sup>109</sup>KCD, 14 June, 19 June, 5 July, 7 August, 9 August, 10 August, 28 August 1936.

<sup>110</sup>KCD, 25 July, 8 August, 12 August, 25 August 1936. Class meeting regularly held showers for its members. See also 21 February 1936 and 27 March 1936.

<sup>111</sup>Interview, Vera Gorham, 12 December 2001. For Kay's tea see KCD, 3 September 1936. Kay wrote on 22 September 1937, "Went to Marion Brown's trousseau tea at night. Lovely lingerie." This type of trousseau tea was also common in other cities. For Montreal see Baillargeon, *Making Do*, 60-1.

<sup>112</sup>KCD, 26 August 1936, 14 September 1936, 17 September 1936.

<sup>113</sup>Married at age 25 and 28 respectively, Harry and Kay were slightly outside the average age of marriage. Harry was slightly younger than the average age for men in the 1931 census of 28.5 and Kay slightly older than the average of 25.1 for women. See Strong-Boag, *New Day Recalled*, 83-4. Kay's age never appears in the diary as a concern to the couple. Peter Ward relates that in the second half of the 19th century 12 per cent of marriages occurred between older women and younger men. See Ward, *Courtship, Love and Marriage*, 57. A small reception at the home of the bride's parents was still relatively common among the British working class in the interwar years. See Gillis, *For Better, For Worse*, 294.

month to wed and that coloured gowns were quite common, though she found blue to be the most popular, followed by white, with brown and pink tied at a distant third.<sup>114</sup> After the wedding, Kay and Harry took a honeymoon. They had been unsure until the last moment whether they would do so. But Harry received a raise the day before the wedding and so they decided to go to New York City.<sup>115</sup> After the ceremony, and in preparation for the trip, Harry's brother George drove the newlyweds to Buffalo. The wedding night is one of the few times Kay wrote anything intimate in her diary: "Harry was wonderful to me."<sup>116</sup>

Kay and Harry spent five days in New York City for their honeymoon. Taking the bus from Buffalo, they arrived in Manhattan, after a nineteen-hour trip, at 1:45 a.m. and without hotel reservations, had to stay at an expensive hotel, the Vanderbilt, where, Kay noted amusedly, they were given a room with twin beds. The next day they registered at the more affordable Woodstock on 43rd Street. Thus, as Karen Dubinsky has found more generally for travellers in modest circumstances, Kay and Harry participated in the emerging honeymoon culture, but did so within their own means.<sup>117</sup> Indeed, they did not go up the Empire State building because of the expense. They did, however, visit other, cheaper sites: the Rockefeller Center, Coney Island, and Macy's.<sup>118</sup> Dubinsky argues that the early 20th century marked a transitional period between the 19th-century bridal tour, when upper-class couples visited family, and the mass honeymoon of the 1940s and 1950s, entailing the private, romantic retreat of newlyweds. She argues that in the early 20th century, as opportunities for travel became more available, honeymoons became more desirable for the middle class. When working-class couples could afford a honeymoon, however, they still tended to visit family.<sup>119</sup> Here again, as with their courtship, Kay and Harry's honeymoon bridges traditional and more modern patterns of this marriage rite. While Kay and Harry spent much time alone, they also spent a portion of each day with Kay's father who was working on a barge which happened to be temporarily in port, in Brooklyn.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>114</sup>Suzanne Morton, "The June Bride as the Working-Class Bride: Getting Married in a Halifax Working-Class Neighbourhood in the 1920s," in Bettina Bradbury, ed., *Canadian Family History: Selected Readings* (Toronto 1992), 373.

<sup>115</sup>KCD, 4 September 1936.

<sup>116</sup>KCD, 5 August 1936.

<sup>117</sup>Karen Dubinsky, *The Second Greatest Disappointment: Honeymooning and Tourism at Niagara Falls* (Toronto 1999), 165-8. Ward places this transition in a slightly earlier time period, contending that the honeymoon as private retreat had become popular for newlyweds of all classes by the end of the 19th century. See Ward, *Courtship, Love, and Marriage*, 117.

<sup>118</sup>KCD, 6-12 September 1936.

<sup>119</sup>Dubinsky, *The Second Greatest Disappointment*, 8-9, 165.

<sup>120</sup>KCD, 6-12 September 1936.

*Domestic Life*

After marriage, Kay's life changed significantly. Although she had worked for seven years prior to her marriage, she quit her job just days before her wedding. In the interwar years women typically did not work after marriage. Indeed, in the 1930s, both municipalities and large employers often prohibited the employment of married women on the grounds that they were taking jobs away from men.<sup>121</sup> On 31 August Kay wrote in her diary, "last day at work makes me rather blue. Mr Bravin [her boss] told me they are giving me a stove and said some nice things to me. 7 years is a long time."<sup>122</sup> However, while Kay may have been sad to leave the workplace, she did not pine, once married, for her former job. Returning to the office for a day in November she wrote, "at office for first time — Enjoyed myself but wouldn't like to be back."<sup>123</sup> Whether she was truly happy to be out of the office or this was simply her way of justifying her situation in a society which frowned on married women's work cannot be known. Kay's reaction, however, was not an uncommon one at the time. For instance, in her study of family life in 1930s Montréal, Denise Baillargeon found that the women she interviewed remembered happily leaving their jobs as this "was a sign of entry into marriage and thus to a superior status."<sup>124</sup>

Once settled into her new home, Kay fairly quickly fell into a routine of household chores. Following a common working-class pattern, Monday morning was wash day, unless the weather was poor, in which case the laundry was done on Tuesday. On Tuesday and Wednesday mornings Kay ironed and on Friday mornings she cleaned the house. Besides these tasks there was sewing and mending to be done as well as baking — Kay made a pie and muffins almost weekly.<sup>125</sup> Such activities took up the larger portion of the day.<sup>126</sup> Washing in particular, as historians have noted, was a time-consuming process as clothes had to be boiled in a tub on the stove, scrubbed by hand, and then hung out to dry (keeping a watchful eye to make sure they did not get wet from rain or snow). During the interwar years new and more efficient household appliances, such as the electric iron, the floor polisher, the vacuum, and the mechanical fridge, became available.<sup>127</sup> Much of this new technology was touted as more time-efficient and labour-saving, contributing to the im-

<sup>121</sup>Forestell, "The Miner's Wife," 154-5.

<sup>122</sup>KCD, 31 August 1936.

<sup>123</sup>KCD, 13 November 1936.

<sup>124</sup>Baillargeon, *Making Do*, 58.

<sup>125</sup>See for example, KCD, 1-14 March 1937. For a similar pattern in 1930s Montréal see Baillargeon, *Making Do*, 126.

<sup>126</sup>Drawing on the Lynds' work on *Middletown*, Ruth Schwartz Cowan states that in Muncie in the 1920s most of the working-class wives interviewed reported working more than seven hours a day. See *More Work For Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York 1983), 189.

<sup>127</sup>Strong-Boag, "Keeping House in God's Country," 133-4.



proved health of the family and the modernization of the home. In the 1920s and 1930s advertisers promoted domestic consumption of these goods as contributing to familial bliss and stability.<sup>128</sup> Among these items, Veronica Strong-Boag argues, the electric, gas, or propane clothes washer became especially popular.<sup>129</sup> So it is not surprising that by 1944 Kay and Harry owned an electric ringer washing machine, making at least one of Kay's tasks much easier, though, as Kay noted, the machine did tend to break down frequently.<sup>130</sup>

Historians have noted that new household technology did not necessarily decrease women's hours of household work.<sup>131</sup> The introduction of canning into household work is a good example. Margaret Conrad has concluded, from diaries of Maritime women, that canning became part of women's domestic chores in the early 20th century when cheap glass jars became widely available.<sup>132</sup> At that point, such activities became a common method by which working-class married women could contribute to domestic production, thus stretching the household income.<sup>133</sup> The 1930s witnessed an increase in canning and preserving by women in North America as they tried to scrimp and save on reduced household incomes.<sup>134</sup> From July to September Kay spent numerous hours canning local fresh fruit and vegetables such as rhubarb, cherries, plums, peaches, and raspberries, as well as beans and tomatoes from their garden. She also pickled beets and made chow-chow and marmalade.<sup>135</sup> This activity gave the family greater access to fruits and vegetables over the course of the entire year, thus improving the health of the family. However, it also increased Kay's household work, not only during the canning process itself but also in the care and maintenance of multitudes of glass jars. Moreover, canning was not only a new mode of production but also of consumption, with women purchasing and maintaining the tools necessary for this process.

While much has been made of women's contributions to domestic life, less is known of men's role within the home. Historians argue that gender roles were fairly

<sup>128</sup>Hobbs and Pierson, "'When is a Kitchen Not a Kitchen?'" ; Dianne Dodd, "Women in Advertising: The Role of Canadian Women in the Promotion of Domestic Electrical Technology in the Interwar Period," in Marianne Gosztanyi Ainley, ed., *Despite the Odds: Essays on Canadian Women and Science* (Montréal 1990), 131-51. For the United States see Susan Strasser, *A History of American Housework* (New York 1982), chapter 13.

<sup>129</sup>Strong-Boag, "Keeping House in God's Country," 133-4. For the effort involved in hand washing see Strong-Boag, *New Day Recalled*, 135. Washing machines wore out quickly because the foundry, with its smoke and dust from the Coke and oily sand was inherently a dirty place. The work on the pouring floor created its own sweat and dirt. Similarly see Nancy Forestell, "The Miner's Wife," 145.

<sup>130</sup>KCD, May 1944.

<sup>131</sup>Cowan, *More Work For Mother*, 178; Strasser, *A History of American Housework*, 268.

<sup>132</sup>Conrad, "'Sundays Always Make Me Think of Home'," 102.

<sup>133</sup>Morton, *Ideal Surroundings*, 78; Forestell, "The Miner's Wife," 151.

<sup>134</sup>Mintz and Kellogg, *Domestic Revolutions*, 137-8.

<sup>135</sup>This was a regular activity from July to September after Kay was married.

distinct in the early 20th century. Yet they also point to the ways in which boundaries were crossed.<sup>136</sup> Through oral histories of working-class women from 1890 to 1940 in England, Elizabeth Roberts found that some men would help out with housework during emergencies, or with heavier work such as lugging groceries, wallpapering, or painting.<sup>137</sup> In the Canadian context, historians have discovered that men would “help out” by washing dishes, or doing “odd-jobs” and home repairs.<sup>138</sup> Both Suzanne Morton and Joy Parr similarly point to the way in which some men were involved in gardening. Yet such activities, these historians contend, occurred within a liminal space, areas of masculine independence within the confines of the home.<sup>139</sup>

Much of the work Harry did around the home conformed to traditional gender norms. Kay recorded that her husband performed tasks such as painting the back porch or storm windows, washing the verandah, and fixing the back steps. He also participated in joint projects related to fixing up the house such as laying oilcloth flooring and wallpapering. Both of them gardened at night. And like other family men of the era, Harry would help out by vacuuming and dusting when Kay was sick.<sup>140</sup>

Kay and Harry's relationship, however, also extends the findings of gender historians that the division of labour within the home was likely more fluid than previously supposed. Harry frequently helped out with the canning, particularly with time-consuming tasks such as pitting cherries. He also contributed his time and energy to weekly household chores. By 1938 the couple had fallen into a pattern where Harry regularly washed and waxed the bathroom and kitchen floors.<sup>141</sup> When he was home on washday he would also help hang the laundry. It is important not to overstate the case that the gendered division of labour was more porous than historians have previously believed. Much of the work within the home was divided by gender — mainly along the lines of indoor versus outdoor tasks. For example, Kay did most of the daily cooking, while it was Harry's job in the autumn

<sup>136</sup>For a discussion on the problems of using the categories of public and private sphere and of engendering the household/private sphere as female, see Nancy Christie, “Introduction: Family, Community, and the Rise of Liberal Society,” in Nancy Christie, ed., *Households of Faith: Family, Gender, and Community in Canada, 1760-1969* (Montréal and Kingston 2002), 3-9.

<sup>137</sup>Elizabeth Roberts, *A Woman's Place: An Oral History of Working-Class Women, 1890-1940* (Oxford 1984), 116.

<sup>138</sup>Baillargeon, *Making Do*, 126; Morton, *Ideal Surroundings*, 129; Rosenfeld, “‘It Was A Hard Life’,” 259; Forestell, “The Miner's Wife,” 145.

<sup>139</sup>Morton, *Ideal Surroundings*, 129; Parr, *The Gender of Breadwinners*, 190-1.

<sup>140</sup>For outdoor work see KCD, 30 May 1938, 21 July 1939, 28 July 1939, 18 November 1939. For joint projects see 3 October 1936 and 1-4 May 1937; for gardening see 21 May 1937, 1 June 1938. For housework see 15 January 1938.

<sup>141</sup>KCD, 29 January 1938, 19 January 1938, 17 July 1939.

and spring to clean and install or remove the storm windows.<sup>142</sup> Yet, strict divisions were not maintained. Harry's participation in vacuuming, waxing floors, and pitting cherries suggests historians need to examine further male contributions to domestic labour.

### *Leisure Time*

Kay and Harry's married life did not centre only around the home, but also, as had their courtship, the church. They continued to participate in BYPU activities.<sup>143</sup> In addition, Kay remained active in Class Meetings and choir and also joined the Mission Circle, becoming its secretary in March 1938. By April 1938 Harry was on the Finance Board, the central committee responsible for the running of the church.<sup>144</sup> Kay and Harry's activities within the church reflect the gendered nature of lay leadership. Lynne Marks has found that in Protestant churches in small-town Ontario in the late 19th century, married men generally held the administrative offices within the church. In doing so they "affirmed their role as head of a Christian household."<sup>145</sup> If Harry's case is indicative, this pattern held well into the 20th century. After marriage, Kay and Harry also continued to attend a variety of church functions. In 1937, for example, Kay recorded such events as a missionary rally in Saint Catharines, a Ladies' Aid tea, and a Ladies' Aid Strawberry Festival. Occasionally they would attend special events at other churches. In April 1937, for instance, they went to the Anglican church to watch Canadian National Railway (CN) films of the British Isles. A year later they returned to hear a performance of Handel's *Messiah*. In 1938 they attended an organ recital at the Presbyterian church and in the same year Kay went to the bazaars of both the Anglican and Lutheran churches.<sup>146</sup>

Although Kay and Harry attended all the annual religious celebrations such as Easter or Christmas at their church, these events, like holidays such as 24 May or Thanksgiving, also offered the young couple some much-needed leisure time. Both during their courtship and in the early years of their marriage Kay and Harry took advantage of public holidays to spend time together. As they had when they were

<sup>142</sup>KCD, 24 April 1937, 16 October 1937.

<sup>143</sup>While generally membership in the BYPU was limited to unmarried youth, Kay and Harry had developed a strong-knit group of friends within the group and so continued to attend BY meetings after marriage. As their friends married, this cohort formed a separate Couples Club within First Church. Interview, Jennifer Brooks, 31 March 2001.

<sup>144</sup>KCD, 31 March 1938, 25 April 1938.

<sup>145</sup>Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks*, 54. Marks has found that in the late 19th century, that middle-class church members often held higher positions of leadership within the church than working-class members. That the chairman of the finance committee in 1938 was a doctor indicates that this pattern of lay leadership may have continued well into the 20th century. See Marks, 56.

<sup>146</sup>KCD, 27 January, 4 March, 13 April, 27 April, 25 June 1937; 8 May, 25 and 30 November 1938.

courting, they frequently took the opportunity for a day's outing, for example, to the Falls, where they would walk around, take in a show and occasionally dinner, or to lakeside Port Dalhousie.<sup>147</sup> They also took long weekends out of town. John Jackson has noted that 1914 to 1960 was a transitional period in the history of transportation, with railway transportation at its height but automobile and bus use beginning to expand.<sup>148</sup> Kay and Harry took full advantage of these newer forms of transportation. As noted earlier, for their honeymoon in 1936 they took the bus to New York City. The following Labour Day weekend they took the bus to Cleveland to attend an exposition. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, they also took several car trips through central Ontario with close friends who owned a car.<sup>149</sup>

### *Childrearing*

Having children resulted in new changes for Kay and Harry. Kay's first child, a son, was born in February 1940 and her second, a girl, in July 1944.<sup>150</sup> Although Kay had always had a close relationship with her family, they pitched in especially during and after her pregnancies. When Kay was feeling ill during pregnancy, Harry helped out around the home, picking up groceries, vacuuming, and helping with the washing.<sup>151</sup> Kay's mother made sure that Harry had supper while Kay was in hospital and prepared meals for several days for the young couple once Kay returned home.<sup>152</sup> After the second child she lived with Kay and Harry for several weeks to help out. In addition, various relatives brought baking, helped out by caring for the first child, and performed daily chores such as ironing or washing. And when the baby was old enough, Kay's parents would come over for an evening and temporarily relieve Kay from her childcare duties.<sup>153</sup>

There is little on childrearing in Kay's diaries. One pattern which does emerge within the diaries, however, is a dramatic change in churchgoing activities during Kay's first pregnancy and in Kay and Harry's lives as young parents. Kay was less likely to attend church, especially near the end of her pregnancy, so Harry would often go alone. Once the baby arrived, they took turns going to church, one in the morning and the other in the evening.<sup>154</sup> Kay did, however, remain involved with the choir and Mission Circle. By 1944 their son was old enough to attend Sunday School. Harry's aid was central to his son's religious education. In the early 20th

<sup>147</sup>KCD, 1 January, 24 May, 31 December 1934; 19 April, 24 May 1935; Thanksgiving 1936; 24 May, 11 October 1937.

<sup>148</sup>Jackson, *The Canals and their Communities*, 301, 308.

<sup>149</sup>KCD, 3-6 September 1937, 2-5 September 1938, 2-4 August 1941.

<sup>150</sup>With no complications, Kay spent nine days in hospital after each birth.

<sup>151</sup>KCD, 8 July 1939, 14 July 1939, 6 January 1940, 13 January 1940, 27 January 1940, 2 January 1940, 8 January 1940, 8 May 1944, 8 July 1944.

<sup>152</sup>KCD, 27 February to 10 March 1940.

<sup>153</sup>KCD, 4 March-27 April 1940.

<sup>154</sup>For example, see KCD, September 1940.

century leaders within mainstream Protestant churches had strongly admonished fathers to be “Protestant role models”<sup>155</sup> to their sons and to encourage their sons to attend Sunday School and ultimately become church members.<sup>156</sup> With Kay pregnant and then caring for a new infant, it was Harry who ensured their son arrived safely at Sunday School.<sup>157</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Although Kay continued her diary after the birth of her first child, she discontinued her entries shortly after the birth of her second one. Clearly the addition of a second child to the family gave her much less time, or left her too tired, to jot down even a few lines detailing her day. What she did leave, however, provides a rich record of a working-class women’s daily activities. It is not a complete record. She is silent on her reaction to her social and cultural environment — to church life, to the Depression — as well as on her personal feelings about her domestic situation. Yet the diaries provide a rare glimpse into aspects of the daily life of a working-class woman in the industrial heartland of Ontario.

Notably, the diaries provide some insight into the consumption patterns of one working-class family. Upon marriage, Kay and Harry would probably have been in a better financial position than many working-class couples. They were of course affected by the Depression. For a number of years Harry worked only two or three days a week. They delayed their marriage. And since they did not have a child until 1940 it is likely that they practiced some form of contraception, delaying parenthood as well. Yet Kay had been employed for seven years prior to her marriage. Adhering to Baptist prohibitions against such things as drinking or smoking probably enabled Kay and Harry to save some money. Nor did their day-to-day leisure activities — church, walks, outings to the library — cost money. Whatever the reason, Kay and Harry were able to save enough money for such things as purchasing good furniture or a diamond ring, as well as taking the occasional trip. Their experience suggests the idea of the 1930s as primarily a time of economic hardship needs further examination.

Similarly, these diaries suggest that historians need to investigate more closely the place of religion within working-class communities. The Baptist community provided not simply the backdrop to Kay’s early adulthood, but shaped her values and leisure time. She did not accept without question all the strictures of the Baptist denomination, seeing no harm, for example, in dancing. Kay’s life, however, was embedded within the Baptist community, which provided her with neighbours, lifelong friends, and a network of support. Moreover, this group formed part of the

<sup>155</sup>Patricia Dirks, “Reinventing Christian Masculinity and Fatherhood: The Canadian Protestant Experience, 1900-1920,” in Nancy Christie, ed., *Households of Faith*, 291.

<sup>156</sup>Dirks, “Reinventing Christian Masculinity and Fatherhood,” 293.

<sup>157</sup>KCD, May-June 1944.

larger Protestant community in Welland, a community that reflected Kay's strong loyalty to the British Empire, and ambiguity, if not antagonism, towards those who did not fit within, or adhere to, British traditions.

The Baptist community, of course, also provided a central site for Kay's courtship and continued to be important in her early married life. But her life was not confined to church activities. Her employment as a secretary, her unpaid labour within the home, and her leisure activities — from strolls around town, to day trips, to weekend vacations — were all equally important parts of her life. Indeed, while much of life for both Kay and Harry involved hard physical labour and daily routine, her diaries note not simply the drudgery of life but also the great pleasure of small things.<sup>158</sup>

Kay's diaries, in sum, provide valuable insights into a variety of aspects of her life. She details the advent of a typical working-class woman's life-cycle: paid employment, courtship, marriage, unpaid household worker, motherhood, and childcare. She also allows us insight into the life lived in between these categories: religious believer, community member, vacationer. As Joy Parr and others have demonstrated, social relations are interdependent.<sup>159</sup> Kay's diaries provide an important glimpse into the multiple identities she held, and the rich layers of her life first as a single woman and then as a wife, mother, and always as a devout Baptist. Her family life and religious life became shaping forces in her identity. Neither encompassed all of her being. But together they created overlapping spheres through which she lived her life.

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<sup>158</sup>Similarly see Rosenfeld, "'It Was a Hard Life,'" 256, 262-3.

<sup>159</sup>Parr, *The Gender of Breadwinners*, 8-9, 245. See also Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks*, 4.

**In the next issue of the  
*Industrial and Labor Relations Review*  
(Vol. 57, No. 3, April 2004)**

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**The Role of Performance-Related Pay in Renegotiating the "Effort Bargain": The Case of the British Public Service** David Marsden

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