

HELEN BLAKELY ANDERSON

Inducted 2004

Helen Blakely Anderson was known as the “Poet Laureate of Prince Edward County”. Helen was born in 1865 on the farm of her parents, Robert Blakely and Sarah Ann Wilson. Helen was of United Empire Loyalist descent, as a great-grand-daughter of Daniel Reynolds, the first white settler of Wellington in Prince Edward County. The Blakely sisters, Helen, Libby, Matilda, and Susan, attended the little red schoolhouse in Gilead, where Helen showed promise in writing and memorizing every verse in her readers. She attended Picton High School, and then Ottawa Normal School, returning to teach in the county. Her first position was at Victoria in Ameliasburgh Township, then taught at the rural schools in Salem, Schoharie, Melville, Gilead, and Niles Corners. She became one of the best known and best loved teachers in Prince Edward County.



She was married to William Henry Anderson, a farmer in Melville located on the south shore of Consecon Lake. After teaching for twenty years, ill health forced her to an early retirement. Despite this, she never lost touch with many of her former students, and encouraged many to also go into teaching.

It was at this time she began her prolific work as a poet and writer. The beautiful setting of her home on shore of the lake became the inspiration for many of her poems. Helen had a regular column in *The Ontario Intelligencer* called “Wayside Thoughts” writing under the pen-name “The Wayfarer”. A book of her poetry called *Under Country Skies* was published in 1933 and in 1939 the *Poetry Digest* in New York published *Echoes of Summer*. At the end of WWII her poem, *Yesterday and Today*, was published in the *Toronto Star*.

Helen’s husband died in 1932 but she remained on the farm for the next sixteen years. In 1948 she moved to a small home in the village of Wellington, close to the original stone home built by her ancestor, Daniel Reynolds. In one of her poems she wrote

*The old stone house today it stands
Like a beacon bright o’er all the land;
And our hearts beat high with courage true
As we follow the trail he blazed anew;*

She continued to write well into her senior years. Helen Blakely Anderson died at age 91 in her home on November 22, 1956. The *Picton Gazette* had received recent poems and news items from her only a week before her death. She was buried with her husband in Christ Church Cemetery near the village of Hillier in Prince Edward County.