

**PRIVATE TO PUBLIC:
FRANCES STEWART, ELLEN DUNLOP,
AND THE PRODUCTION OF *OUR FOREST HOME***

A Thesis Submitted to the Committee on Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts
in the Faculty of Arts and Science

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of
Amy Green (1935-1995).

ABSTRACT

Private to Public:
Frances Stewart, Ellen Dunlop,
and the Production of *Our Forest Home*

Jodi Lee Aoki

Irish immigrant Frances Stewart reveals her life through half a century of letters that she wrote home to Ireland after arriving in Upper Canada in 1822. Original, excerpted, and copied variants of the letters are found in archival collections, while heavily edited published versions occur in *Our Forest Home: Being Extracts from the Correspondence of the late Frances Stewart*, compiled by Frances's daughter, Ellen Dunlop in two variant editions (1889, 1902).

By focusing on aspects of class, gender, and ethnicity, and known factors about the lived experiences of Frances and Ellen, this thesis discusses the manner in which Ellen re-describes her mother for publication. Textual analysis is used as an investigative tool for extracting meaning from the layers of text, and allows for credible postulations about the editing decisions that Ellen made. Concluding remarks include a discussion of the impact of *Our Forest Home* on later publications about Peterborough's history and Upper Canadian immigrant women.

Keywords: Frances Stewart, Thomas Alexander Stewart, *Our Forest Home: Being Extracts from the Correspondence of the late Frances Stewart*, Eleanor Susannah Dunlop, Peterborough, Ontario, Textual Analysis, Catharine Parr Traill, Nineteenth-Century Canadian Immigrant Letters

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As a long-time employee of Trent University Archives, I am grateful for the opportunity to study and research a collection known to me so intimately through the course of my work. Bernadine Dodge, University Archivist, offered her support and encouragement in countless ways, and I am forever indebted. Several institutions assisted me in my quest for further primary materials: Peterborough Centennial Museum and Archives, Huntington Library, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Queen's University Archives, the Glenbow Archives, Toronto Reference Library, and Library and Archives Canada, and to all these, and Trent's Bata Library, I wish to express my sincere appreciation.

I also wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to my dearly loved family, my husband, Naomichi Aoki, and my sons, Naoto and Yoshi. They supported me with patience and love, and their ever-at-the-ready abundance of humour.

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ABBREVIATIONS

OFH - *Our Forest Home, Being Extracts from the Correspondence of the Late Frances Stewart*, ed. E.S. Dunlop (Toronto, 1889; and Montreal, 1902)

TUA - Trent University Archives

PRONI - Public Record Office of Northern Ireland

TRL - Toronto Reference Library

LAC - Library and Archives Canada

PCMA - Peterborough Centennial Museum and Archives

Introduction

In 1822 at the age of 28, Frances Stewart (1794-1872), along with her husband and their three daughters, emigrated from Ireland to Upper Canada. Facing formidable circumstances especially daunting to a family of genteel background, the pioneers settled in Douro Township on 1200 acres along the Otonabee River, in a location now part of the city of Peterborough, Ontario. Frances wrote and received hundreds of letters over her lifetime and almost 400 are preserved in public archives and private collections.

Approximately 100 of these are attributed to Frances, although some are copies, excerpts, and fragments. Such extensive textual evidence affords researchers the opportunity to study the life of one of Canada's earliest European settlers and to gain further understanding of Upper Canadian colonial history. The writings reveal the thoughts of one of the first British immigrants to the Peterborough area. They tell of a pioneer woman's day-to-day experiences: her tasks and responsibilities in the home; her relationship with her husband, her children and servants; her encounters with aboriginal natives; her impressions of her natural physical surroundings; and her struggles to retain the semblance of genteel order in a vastly different social and physical environment.

A discussion around the narrative layers of Frances's correspondence is timely. Researchers realize that they are able to gain greater understanding of the ways in which social networks evolved historically by considering women's pioneer experiences. John Walsh and Steven High argue that, "it is not simply enough to think of socio-historical processes like community as existing in a vacuum."¹ They maintain that it is social relationships that give space and place meaning and value over time. Selena Crosson

¹ John C. Walsh and Steven High, "Rethinking the Concept of Community," *Histoire Sociale/Social History*. 32.64 (1999) 258.

expounds on the mechanism by which intricate boundaries were redefined and economic advantages gained through women's relationships:

Highly placed social "connections" were the keys to opening doors in the new world as well as the old and could mean the difference between getting or not getting a job, a generous allotment of land, a night's lodging, a school, a church or even a letter, in a system which had little formal infrastructure and had yet to develop a professional bureaucracy. During this period, virtually all social and business transactions were based on patronage or "who you knew" and women's social interactions established important links, which were then able to be used as "introductions" or letters of reference to others in a position to be of help.²

Life writings of Upper Canadian women have thus taken on new importance. They are now recognized as holding valuable detail about complex power relations that existed in their authors' lives during the developmental years of the nation.

In this thesis, I present a contextualization of Frances's life based on an examination of her class, gender, and ethnicity, as revealed in the letters. This approach provides the basis from which I compare textual examples from the archival documents with the published compilations found in two editions of *Our Forest Home: Being Extracts from the Correspondence of the late Frances Stewart* (hereafter referred to as *OFH*)³ prepared by her daughter, Eleanor Susannah Dunlop. One small piece of evidence suggests that Frances had considered writing an autobiographical sketch at one time; however, she "always appeared to have a great objection to doing so,"⁴ according to her son, Henry. A typed photocopy of a partial letter, for which there is no original, written by Frances to Henry in 1867, includes Henry's assessment that his mother did mean to compose a sketch of her life. He explains, "the following part of a letter found among her papers shews that she had at one time thought of carrying out the idea. It is headed

² Selena M. Crosson, "Pilgrim Sisters: Exploring Female Friendship in Upper Canada in the Life of Frances Stewart (1794-1872)." (Masters thesis, Trent University, 2005) 78-79.

“Letters to my son”.⁵ Regrettably, only *one* of the above mentioned “Letters to my son” exists and it is but a fragment.

I also consider the published versions in relationship to the historical and social context in which they were edited for publication by Ellen. Textual analyses reveal that Frances was misrepresented in *OFH* in several instances. The scope of the thesis cannot encompass a discussion of all extant letters against the excerpts chosen for reiteration by Ellen; however, the examples given will capture the pattern of the editing that occurred.

Unlike the writings of her friend, Catharine Parr Traill, and Catharine’s sister, Susanna Moodie, Frances’s literary legacy has received little attention in scholarly circles. Joyce Lewis has written two biographical papers, “Frances Stewart,” a chapter in *Portraits: Peterborough Area Women Past & Present*,⁶ and from “Douro to Dublin: the letters of Frances Stewart,” an occasional paper published by the Peterborough Historical Society.⁷ Elizabeth Shearman Hall and the late Jean Shearman, great great-granddaughters of Frances Stewart, transcribed the letters and published *A Sense of Continuity: The Stewarts of Douro*,⁸ a book with a genealogical focus. Selena Crosson has written a recent masters thesis, “Pilgrim Sisters: Exploring Female Friendship in Upper Canada in the Life of Frances Stewart (1794-1872),”⁹ in which she examines Frances’s life within a wider study of pioneer female friendships, and others have

³ Frances Stewart, *Our Forest Home: Being Extracts from the Correspondence of the late Frances Stewart*, ed. E.S. Dunlop (Toronto: Printed by the Presbyterian Printing and Publishing Co., 1889).

Frances Stewart, *Our Forest Home: Being Extracts from the Correspondence of the late Frances Stewart*, ed. E.S. Dunlop, (Montreal: Gazette Printing and Publishing Co., 1902).

⁴ Frances Stewart fonds, TUA, 94-006, Vol.5, p. 1100, Henry Stewart note [after 1867].

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ Joyce C. Lewis, “Frances Stewart,” in *Portraits: Peterborough Area Women Past and Present*, ed. Gail Corbett (Peterborough: Portraits’ Group, 1975) 65-72.

⁷ Joyce C. Lewis, “From Douro to Dublin: The Letters of Frances Stewart.” Occasional Paper 14 (Peterborough: Peterborough Historical Society, 1994).

⁸ Elizabeth Shearman Hall and Jean Shearman, *A Sense of Continuity: The Stewarts of Douro*. Rev. ed. (Toronto: Pro Familia, 1993).

⁹ Crosson.

referred to Frances in more generalized studies of Upper Canadian pioneer women and in studies relating to the history of Peterborough. As well, the commentary in *I Bless You in My Heart: Selected Correspondence of Catharine Parr Traill*,¹⁰ by editors Carl Ballstadt, Elizabeth Hopkins, and Michael Peterman,¹¹ importantly confirms my understanding of an especially warm and caring relationship between Traill and Frances, and Traill and Ellen. Several of Traill's letters to Ellen establish that their friendship was mutually respectful, and, that Traill, though older and an established author, valued Ellen's honest and forthright judgments of her manuscripts and published works.

OFH was first published in 1889, purportedly for family, and a second expanded edition appeared in 1902, this version supposedly intended for the public.¹² Research has shown, however, that visions of a public audience were in the editor's mind even as she prepared the manuscript for the first edition. While each edition contains excerpts of letters and an appendix detailing the histories of the Stewart and Browne families,¹³ the 1902 edition has a greater selection of letters, including some from Frances to her grandchildren, and some to her from friends and relatives in Ireland. It also has a new preface (along with the original preface), photos of Frances and her husband, Tom, sketches of Peterborough and the Stewarts' log home, poems, tables of the contents and illustrations, and a brief history of Peterborough written by Ellen's nephew, T.A.S. Hay.

¹⁰ Catharine Parr Traill, *I Bless You in My Heart: Selected Correspondence of Catharine Parr Traill*, ed. Carl Ballstadt, Elizabeth Hopkins, and Michael Peterman (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1996).

¹¹ Michael Peterman generously allowed me to use his transcripts of the letters between Traill and Ellen, and Traill and Frances, for my own research.

¹² Eighty-three copies of the first edition were published: 75 were ordered, and an additional 8 were assembled from loose pages. The number of copies published of the second edition is unknown.

¹³ Kirkpatrick papers, PRONI, letters dated 29 October 1888, 16 April 1889, and 7 March 1896, Ellen Dunlop to George Kirkpatrick. Ellen's brothers, Charles and Henry, and her cousin, Alexander Kirkpatrick, were all involved in researching the family history. While the history appears as an appendix in both editions of *OFH*, the version in the second edition is expanded.

Frances Brown, daughter of Ellen's sister, Kate, assisted Ellen with the second edition, and her commentary along with Ellen's is evident in a few instances.¹⁴

Dozens of quotations attributed to Frances have appeared in books and articles in the century that followed the publication of *OFH*, and one or the other edition is invariably cited as the source for these. Of consequence is the fact that some of the published letters are substantively different from the corresponding archival record, and are therefore questionable as faithful representations of the original texts. This is problematic as it begs the question of whether Frances is being represented accurately by those who quote her words. People view Frances's life and experience depending on which narrative they have read, and one must ask whether the Frances Stewart whom most of us know through reading Ellen's very Victorian compilation is the same Frances Stewart whose purpose in writing her letters was to communicate her feelings to an intended audience of reciprocating loved ones who were painfully and forever missed. Frances is very clear about her audience, remarking in one letter that, "I am always happy when I can write my letters at night for then I am with my friends."¹⁵

Concepts of class, gender, and ethnicity underlie the entire discussion of this thesis. These parameters serve to provide a framework from which meaning is extrapolated from the variant texts; such an approach facilitates postulations, however tentative, about the editing decisions that Ellen made. It is important to recognize and accept that one can never unequivocally reconstruct an accurate past, as there is no archimedean place from which to stand outside one's own life and context. And, working

¹⁴ Frances Brown wrote the preface for the second edition and her commentary appears on pages 146, xli, and lxxv. Her initials also appear with some of the illustrations.

¹⁵ Frances Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #269, Frances Stewart [excerpts, bound with ribbon], 27 May 1826.

with the frame of historical causality, I use elements of analysis borrowed from poststructuralism to investigate the narrativity of both the original and the published versions of the letters.

Narrativity comprises more than the constructive elements of a narrative; it is a concept by which narration is viewed as a process rather than a structure. Meaning and context are key elements, and the narrator's experiences, intentions, and the period in which he or she lived are enmeshed in the narrativity. I have an extraordinary opportunity to compare and contrast parts of a first-person narrative spanning almost three-quarters of a century with a representation of that life composed for publication. David Gerber considers it a novelty to have access to a cache of letters that portrays a life over a long period: "we are rarely privileged... to follow letter-writers through a significant stretch of the life-cycle, dating from immigration in youth or in early adulthood to old age and death, and reflect upon the development of themes, interests, and modes of expression in their letters at the different stages of life."¹⁶ Frances's letters in archival depositories comprise the crucial source material and the first layer(s) of the narrative. Ellen adds a new layer in the first edition of *OFH*, and yet another in the second. Her representation of her mother's letters reflects a desire to reconstruct them for her audience, in the first edition for family, or so she claims, and in the second, for a marketplace still rife with Victorian attitudes and tastes. The nature of the editing, especially in the second edition, for example, falls in line with commercial attractiveness and leads away from the day-to-day life that Frances wrote about. I, too, create a layer in the writing of this thesis. The layers of narrativity all have different purposes.

¹⁶ David A. Gerber, *Authors of Their Lives: The Personal Correspondence of British Immigrants to North America in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: New York UP, 2006) 207-208.

Hayden White explains that “narrative is not simply a recording of what happened in the transition from one state of affairs to another, but a progressive *re-description* of sets of events in such a way as to dismantle a structure encoded in one verbal mode in the beginning so as to justify a recoding of it in another mode at the end.”¹⁷ Language creates meaning, sometimes very different meaning from the conscious intention of the writer or speaker. In the case of Frances’s letters, the words create different meanings for different people. Frances meant her words to have certain meaning when she used them, however they were received and interpreted. Ellen interpreted them within the context of her own life and represented them in *OFH* according to her own principles and convictions. I, too, in the writing of this thesis, attach meaning to the words, reflective of my own life and experiences. My interest in past lives was piqued as a child when my mother’s brothers would visit. We would sit around the table in Maynooth, Ontario and I would watch in fascination as my parents laughed to tears at the retelling of the, albeit, historically suspect, tales of the tiny hamlet. It was hard not to notice that with each retelling, the story changed a little. In my adult years, I can reflect on the idea that many frameworks in a given time and place condition the telling of a story.

Margaret Atwood suggests that, “a work of literature gains meaning not only from its own context but from those later contexts it may find itself placed within.”¹⁸ By conducting a textual analysis of the narrativity of Frances’s letters, I will show the possibilities for purpose and meaning in the various layers of text, while recognizing, like Atwood, that the letters take on new meaning in each context. Diane Macdonell claims that “discourse is social... the words used and the meanings of the words used, depends

¹⁷ Hayden White, “The Historical Text as a Literary Artifact,” in *History and Theory: Contemporary Readings*, ed. Brian Fay, Philip Pomper, and Richard T. Vann (Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1998) 31.

¹⁸ Margaret Atwood, *Moving Targets: Writing With Intent, 1982-2004* (Toronto: Anansi, 2004) 41.

on where and against what the statement is made.”¹⁹ And, while understanding that textual analyses must always take into account the historical and social context in which the discourse occurs, I also consider Bernadine Dodge’s observation that any “explication of the past tends towards interpretation and speculation.”²⁰

These premises all underscore the fact that any analysis of past lives and meaning is complex and conditional. In fact, Noël Carroll asserts that there is more than one story to be told from any given set of events, and that the complementary analyses all profitably contribute to an accurate historical reconstruction. He writes, “there is no reason to presume that these different stories must conflict, and, therefore, no reason to assume that they cannot be assessed in terms of literal truth.”²¹

Readers will become aware of the familiarity with which I refer to various people in this thesis. For the most part, Frances Stewart is “Frances;” her husband, Thomas Alexander Stewart, is “Tom;” Harriet Beaufort is “Harriet;” and the children of Frances and Tom, including “Ellen,” are all referred to by first name after initial introduction. The shortened name references eliminate repetitive terminology, and reflect the aura of familiarity that these characters took on as my research progressed. I have decided to refer to Catharine Parr Traill as “Traill” as this will lessen the possibility of confusion with Frances’s sister, Catherine. Arnold Haultain, Ellen’s author friend, is referred to as “Haultain.” Readers will also become aware that Frances’s writings include journal material comprised of several versions of the travel details of the journey from Ireland to Upper Canada. Some of this material provides the substance for letters written at later

¹⁹ Diane Macdonell, *Theories of Discourse: An Introduction* (New York: Blackwell, 1986) Introduction.

²⁰ Bernadine Dodge, “Across the Great Divide: Archival Discourse and the (Re)presentations of the Past in Late-Modern Society,” *Archivaria*. 53 (2002): 19.

²¹ Noël Carroll, “Interpretation, History, and Narrative” in *Beyond Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays*, Noël Carroll (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001) 150.

times. For ease of communication, my references to the “letters,” therefore, will always be understood to include Frances’s journal material. Spelling anomalies in the quotations from the writings will be maintained.

The writings of Frances Stewart pose a conundrum. Close inspection reveals that some of the “originals” are signed by Frances but are not written in her hand; some are extracts written in other hands but lack salutation or attribution; and some are manuscripts copied and edited for the purpose of publication in *OFH*. For example, one of Frances’s letters is a copy made by her daughter, Bessie, who acquired the original from her mother’s cousin in Ireland (to whom the letter had been sent) shortly after her mother died. Bessie adds a revealing note to the copy she made. She writes, “copied May 27th 1872 from Mrs Wilsons letter sent to us to read & return to her. She loved the writer too much to part with her letter as long as she lives.”²² Bessie’s handwriting in this copy is very similar to Frances’s; fortunately, the postscript confirms that it is a copy. In another instance, there is evidence of Frances having copied over a received letter at least twice; the two copies differ slightly from each other in content. The particular letter is dated September 8th, 1864, and was sent to Frances by Kate Rolleston, daughter of Robert Reid and Maria Stewart Reid, Tom’s sister, upon the death of Frances’s son, William. Complicating the matter, Shearman and Shearman Hall transcribed a slightly different version in their massive transcription project.²³ The sisters do not indicate whether the copy that they transcribed from was in Frances’s hand or whether it was the original from Rolleston; regardless, their version is only available in the transcription format. By

²² Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #129. This quotation is Bessie Brown’s [1872] postscript on her own copy of a letter that had been sent originally by her mother, Frances Stewart, to a cousin, Mrs. Wilson, on 3 June 1828.

²³ Jean Shearman and Elizabeth Shearman Hall collection. TUA, 94-006.

examining short excerpts from the variant copies, one is able to see differences in content. The first version, in Frances's hand, is available in photocopy format only:

Oh it is intense comfort to be able to dwell on those last words!! I hope I have written this clearly for you – but I think more was said to me which I cannot now remember for I felt so stunned but dearest Aunt were I able to write a volume, I could not give you more comfort than you may find in these few broken sentences.²⁴

The second version, also in Frances's hand, is in original, though copied, format:

Oh it is such intense comfort to be able to dwell on those last precious words – how few is the number to whom such blessed comfort is given. I have only put down what was spoken to myself – much more was said to both Louisa & Dr. McNabb - & I think more to myself which I cannot now remember – for I felt so stunned – but my dearest Aunt were I able to write a volume I could not give you more comfort than may be found in these few broken sentences.²⁵

The third version transcribed by Shearman and Shearman Hall in typescript is exactly as the one directly above except for the fact that it indicates the presence of an added note at the end in another hand.²⁶ None of these versions is the *original* from which we can make comparisons of altered text. This example clearly demonstrates the problems associated with the archival material.

One wonders what material Ellen used when she compiled *OFH*. Each change in a copy comprises a divergence from the original text and may represent alternate intentions and meanings. How does one analyze the many versions of all these writings? This question has implications for the study of the re-description in the layers of narrativity in Frances's writings, but is impossible to answer fully.

There is ample evidence, too, that Frances's friends and relatives in Ireland recopied her letters and sent parts of them to others. The initial recipients sometimes

²⁴ Stewart fonds, TUA, 94-007/1/10, Letter #14, Kate Rolleston to Frances Stewart, 8 September 1864.

²⁵ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #219b, Kate Rolleston to Frances Stewart, undated but known to be 8 September 1864.

²⁶ Shearman and Shearman Hall collection, TUA, 94-006, p.928.

mention in their own letters that they have included excerpts from Frances and it is clear that some of the handwritten documents in archival holdings comprise such copies.

Ellen and her brother Charles were both active in gathering their mother's letters, Ellen acquiring some from relatives in Ireland during a visit there in 1852, and later through the post, and Charles some, probably in 1859, on a visit to Ireland while he was living in England. Charles, too, had begun a manuscript about his mother's life by 1871 and notations on this document reveal that it was sent to Goodwood near Peterborough, the home of his sister, Bessie, where Frances was living, and corrected by Frances herself, a few months before she died on February 24, 1872.²⁷ This could imply, therefore, that Frances had a hand in the preliminary editing of her own letters.

Because of the problematic nature of the primary documents, one must always be cognizant of the fact that the raw data being worked with may have been edited in small or substantial ways at least once and sometimes, more often, and by several people. The archival conundrum would be easier to unravel if the passages generally duplicated each other across the various layers. However, there is often new material in subsequent layers and it is obvious that many of the published passages cannot be measured against primary counterparts. This indicates that Ellen had access to primary documents that are not available in known archival depositories today.

To her credit, Ellen admits to "cutting and carving"²⁸ the letters in *OFH*. Surely, several passages are omitted and sections of disparate letters are sometimes included as one and subsequently misdated. Logistically, she would have had to consider the number of pages her book would comprise, and also the need to create a coherent and accurate

²⁷ Stewart fonds, TUA, 97-023 Folder 1, Letter #3, [manuscript], 1871-1872.

²⁸ *OFH*, 1889, preface.

story; these factors would justifiably account for some of the editing. Ellen received research and editing assistance from several people: her brothers, Henry and Charles; her sister, Anna and Anna's son, Thomas Alexander Stewart Hay; her niece, Frances Stewart, daughter of her brother, William; her niece, Frances Brown, daughter of her sister, Kate; her mother's sister's son, Alexander Kirkpatrick; her beloved friend, author Catharine Parr Traill; and her younger friend, author and editor Arnold Haultain, who had publishing connections. All the above would have been immersed in their own discursive location, hence presenting different foci and emphases vis-à-vis Frances's life and experiences.

The issues surrounding the archival sources are important to understand, as the deviations themselves tell a story that is worthy of analytical and scholarly discussion. They provide alternate glimpses into Frances's life and Ellen's life, and reflect changing perspectives over time. Undeniably, itemization and demarcation have been meticulous undertakings. However, notwithstanding all the problems associated with the many layers, they provide a basis in reality, as all are founded on words written by Frances.

Trent University Archives houses the bulk of the correspondence and surviving fragments of her journal, while other repositories hold a fewer number of items. I draw upon these primary archival documents for the fabric of my thesis. Other letters between Traill and Frances, and Traill and Ellen held at Library and Archives Canada, some of which were published in *I Bless You In My Heart*,²⁹ attest to the close relationships between the Traills and Stewarts, and it is apparent that Traill, as an older friend and confidante of Ellen, advised her on literary matters regarding the publication of Frances's letters.

²⁹ Traill, *I Bless You in My Heart*.

Many books and papers deal with immigrant letters and describe ways in which their authors study and analyze content and meaning. Papers by Ruth-Ann Harris³⁰ and David Gerber,³¹ read at the “Reading the Emigrant Letter” conference in Ottawa in 2003, contend with such issues as silences and untruths, and discuss gendered writing. Harris found a gendered commonality in themes across a large sample of immigrant letters and argues that the writings of individuals are a plausible source of authentic information about the early immigrant experience:

Although some may question the reliability of immigrant letters as source material for examining the immigrant experience – and acknowledging that immigrants do not often describe their true feelings and circumstances, nor do they often admit failure in the new land – yet I am convinced of their value, how frequently they express common themes, thereby suggesting that there was a collective experience of what it meant to be an immigrant over time and across space.³²

Gerber claims that immigrants purposefully interchanged fact and fiction in their accounts of their new lives. This speaks, for example, to the obvious discrepancies in Tom and Frances’s accounts of their food supplies during their first few years in Upper Canada. Tom describes the family as starving at times, while Frances not once refers to an inadequate food supply.

Gerber’s later work, *Authors of Their Lives: The Personal Correspondence of British Immigrants in the Nineteenth Century*,³³ published as I neared completing my thesis, is a key contribution to the study of British immigrant letters. Using specific examples to facilitate his analyses, Gerber clarifies concepts about British immigrant

³⁰ Ruth-Ann Harris, “‘Thinking Long’: Gender Differences in the American Letter.” Paper presented at the Reading the Emigrant Letter conference, Ottawa, August 2003.

³¹ David A. Gerber, “Act of Deceiving and Withholding in Immigrant Letters.” Paper presented at the Reading the Emigrant Letter conference, Ottawa, August 2003.

³² Harris, 12.

³³ Gerber, *Authors of Their Lives*.

letters in general that are not directly discussed in other works. The book, as will become evident in subsequent chapters, provides support for some of my own ideas that I had previously been unable to corroborate in many months of research.

Helen Buss's *Mapping Ourselves: Canadian Women's Autobiography in English*,³⁴ and Buss and Marlene Kadar's edited *Working in Women's Archives: Researching Women's Private Literature and Archival Documents*,³⁵ deal with theoretical approaches to nineteenth-century women's autobiographical writings. These books reinforce my belief that a painstaking examination of Frances's archival letters and the later-published, edited versions is a worthwhile study that reveals much about the gendered and historical identities of author and editor. At the same time, they affirm the complexity of such an endeavour, one author simply stating that letters do not necessarily reveal the "true core self of the writer."³⁶

Diane Macdonell's *Theories of Discourse: An Introduction*³⁷ establishes many of the premises upon which this thesis is written, most importantly with regard to meaning; Macdonell claims that meaning comes from the social and institutional position wherein the discourse lies. This claim facilitates my study of the layers of text within the context of the social and historical constructs out of which the edited variants evolved.

Frances Stewart's social and class status, her religion, the potato famine, the 1798 Rebellion, and the Napoleonic wars all had an impact on her life experience. Gerald

³⁴ Helen M. Buss, *Mapping Our Selves: Canadian Women's Autobiography in English* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1993).

³⁵ Helen M. Buss and Marlene Kadar, ed. *Working in Women's Archives: Researching Women's Private Literature and Archival Documents* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2001).

³⁶ Gerber, *Authors of Their Lives*, 91.

³⁷ Macdonell, *Theories of Discourse*.

Craig's *Upper Canada: The Formative Years, 1784-1841*,³⁸ and Edwin Guillet's *Early Life in Upper Canada*³⁹ discuss the social and cultural transitions that faced new immigrants, and these books poignantly underscore Frances's personal struggle to devise strategies to reproduce her previous life within the vastly changed social context of Upper Canada. Her letters provided a much-needed outlet for expressing her concerns over changes that she had little control of, especially the education of her children. The fact that she was unable to educate them to her standards is expounded in almost every letter in the first few decades after immigrating. Donald Akenson's *The Irish Diaspora: A Primer*⁴⁰ and Bruce Elliot's *Irish Migrants in the Canadas: A New Approach*⁴¹ are valuable in that they provide contextual historical frameworks for explicating meaning from the writings of immigrants of this period, although Akenson focuses heavily on discussions of the famine and Elliot does not deal specifically with women.

Disorderly Conduct by Carroll Smith-Rosenberg⁴² explores from a feminist stance the ways in which changing social and cultural parameters during the eighteenth and nineteenth century affected women's experiences. She elaborates on the changing private and public gender roles over time, taking into account women's relationships with each other. Such a book has implications for the understanding of Ellen's relationship with her mother, and with Traill. Jane Errington's *Wives and Mothers, School Mistresses*

³⁸ Gerald M. Craig, *Upper Canada: The Formative Years, 1784-1841* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1963).

³⁹ Edwin C. Guillet, *Early Life in Upper Canada* (Toronto: U Toronto P, 1963, c1933).

⁴⁰ Donald Harman Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora: A Primer* (Belfast: The Queen's University of Belfast, 1993).

⁴¹ Bruce S. Elliott, *Irish Migrants in the Canadas: A New Approach* (Kingston: McGill Queen's UP, 1988).

⁴² Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Knopf, 1985).

and *Scullery Maids: Working Women in Upper Canada, 1790-1840*⁴³ discusses societal standards that linked “good” women to Christianity. “Good” women were caregivers and laborers; they nurtured their children and conducted daily tasks that provided for the physical and spiritual well being of the family. Barbara Maas’s *Helpmates of Man*⁴⁴ looks at Upper Canadian husband/wife relationships. She concludes that Frances and Tom’s discordant relationship, apparent in the letters, was a noteworthy anomaly among immigrant couples during the early nineteenth century. Maas also found that, “reports of marital tension are almost totally absent from pioneer women’s private records.”⁴⁵ One might question, therefore, the uniqueness of the Stewart relationship based on this study alone. Of interest, however, is the fact that Frances allows inklings of discord to enter her narrative at all, Maas’s study having identified that such textual revelations are uncommon in Upper Canadian women’s writings. Was the relationship between Frances and Tom particularly bad, or did Frances feel such utter loneliness in her alien world that her letters were absolutely her only outlet for feelings of worry and malaise regarding her husband? It is likely that she would have complete trust in the discretion of those to whom she wrote concerning Tom, especially Harriet Beaufort and Harriet’s brother, Francis, both of who had been committed to her welfare since the age of two.⁴⁶

Writing and publishing conventions were well in place in Canada before *OFH* first appeared in 1889, as many travel books and women’s guides had already been produced, in tandem with the increase of immigrants to Canada. Linda Peterson’s

⁴³ Elizabeth Jane Errington, *Wives and Mothers, School Mistresses and Scullery Maids: Working Women in Upper Canada, 1790-1840* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s UP, 1995).

⁴⁴ Barbara Maas, *Helpmates of Man: Middle-Class Women and Gender Ideology in Nineteenth-Century Ontario*, Kanada-Studien, Vol. 4. (Bochum: Universitätsverlag Dr. N. Brockmeyer, 1990).

⁴⁵ Maas, 102.

⁴⁶ Further discussion about Frances’s adoptive family is found on pages 28-31.

*Traditions of Victorian Women's Autobiography: The Poetics and Politics of Life Writing*⁴⁷ and Philip Davis's *The Victorians, 1830-1880*⁴⁸ discuss the traditions of Victorian writings. Peterson comments on Victorian efforts to reconstruct literary history, saying, "the Victorians rescued and wrote about... [women's] autobiographies for their historical interest, for the social and historical information they contained, for their contribution to literary discussions of a "new" genre, for their relevance to their own lives."⁴⁹ Ellen edited and wrote for all the reasons cited by Peterson when she compiled *OFH*. Davis claims that non-fictional works were the medium by which Victorians "sought to understand most directly, with the least apparent mediation, their own historical context."⁵⁰ His views, too, help to clarify Ellen's several motives in producing *OFH*.

While conducting my research, I became acquainted with two people extraordinarily familiar with Frances. Joyce Lewis studied the family for many years and is considered to be an expert on her. She has been privy to many family stories, having met with several descendents over the years, and she helped me on matters of obscure detail. The late Jean Shearman also helped in determining some of the more elusive family details. Shearman and her sister, Elizabeth Shearman Hall, contributed immensely to my research in that they had originally transcribed the Stewart letters and donated the typed transcriptions to Trent University Archives, where they are available to researchers. The sisters also compiled an exhaustive collection of genealogical information relating to

⁴⁷ Linda H. Peterson, *Traditions of Victorian Women's Autobiography: The Poetics and Politics of Life Writing* (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1999).

⁴⁸ Philip Davis, *The Victorians*. The Oxford English Literary History, Volume 8, 1830-1880 (New York: Oxford UP, 2002).

⁴⁹ Peterson, 4.

⁵⁰ Davis, 404.

the Stewart family and the people with whom the Stewarts had some association; this material proved invaluable in helping me to situate Frances and Ellen in their respective contexts.

Stewart family descendents, David Bate and Stewart Brown, were also generous in their assistance. David Bate provided me with details about his lineage that were not available in the archival record, while Stewart Brown provided me with valuable family contacts and links to further material.

Much of what is known publicly about Frances has been taken from the edited excerpts of her letters found in *OFH*, and these excerpts, interspersed with editorial commentary, shape the commonly held perceptions of this early pioneer immigrant. In order to unravel the differences between texts and to understand the changes effected, it was crucial that I try to know Frances to the greatest extent possible. To this end, I made my first chapter a contextualized biographical account of her based on class, gender, and ethnicity. 'Chapter One' is called "Frances Stewart, genteel pioneer: an examination of a life written and lived," and is a study of her life based solely and purposefully on the available archival record. Such an approach provides a point of reference for subsequent chapters, especially because discussions of the successive layers of text figure so prominently. It examines Frances's childhood amongst her several learned Anglo-Irish relatives, and reflects upon the ways in which education and faith came to shape her thinking, providing her with a perspective that she drew upon when Providence placed her in abject isolation on the opposite side of the Atlantic at the age of 28. Discussions relating to the various perspectives that academics bring to the study of immigrant writings intersperse this section and help to position Frances's letters within the wider

academic inquiry into the subject of immigrant writings. Helen Buss argues that feelings and thoughts and stories must be analyzed from the perspective of gender. We might wonder why, for example, there is no surviving reference to pregnancy and labour and delivery, though Frances had 11 children.

‘Chapter Two’ is called “The editor revealed: the life of Eleanor Susannah Stewart Dunlop.” It was necessary to delineate the factors and contingencies that shaped Ellen’s life in order to consider the rationale underlying her editing decisions. Ellen’s letters to an uncle in Ireland, written with the purpose of gathering her mother’s letters, have proved to be an important source of information about her. They reveal her purposes in wanting to memorialize her mother through a compilation of her letters. We learn, in part, why Ellen, of all Frances’s children, took on this task. The commentary in *OFH*, too, reveals a great deal about the editor; it is interwoven in the excerpts, and is, in fact, sometimes difficult to distinguish from the actual excerpts. To be considered, too, are the Victorian attitudes prevalent in Peterborough and English Canada during the period of Ellen’s life, and the influence of late nineteenth-century publishing conventions. Ellen’s relationships with her husband, Charles Dunlop, and her two author friends, Catharine Parr Traill and Arnold Haultain, the former of whom had been her mother’s close friend and confidante, and who had published numerous books to international acclaim, are also examined with a view to determining their influences on her editing decisions.

The third chapter is called “Private to public: a textual analysis of the progressive re-description of the letters of Frances Stewart.” In order to compare the unpublished letters with the published, I searched out examples of text to illustrate the differences between them, and by examining the discursive context of each I located potential

purposes and meanings of each variant. A passage from an original letter that was edited for the first edition, and which, rather unexpectedly reverts closely to the original again in the second edition, is shown below, as an example:

Original letter: "...At this side of the lake we found the patient oxen – our luggage & ourselves we packed into the sleigh & we proceeded in the shades of evening to Douro..."⁵¹

OFH, 1889: "... late in the night when we were in the dark forest it began to snow again. The progress was much more difficult than I ever expected; the sleigh being heavily loaded I was obliged to walk..."⁵²

OFH, 1902: "...When we crossed the lake we found the patient oxen waiting; our luggage and ourselves we packed into the sleigh, and we proceeded in the shades of evening to Douro..."⁵³

In the first edition, why did Ellen have Frances *walking* to Douro rather than riding in the oxen-drawn sleigh, and in the second, why did she revert to text more closely resembling the original letter? The process outlined above substantiates the commonly held impression that Frances's life record was heavily reconstructed in *OFH*. The silences and omissions are significant, too, in that they indicate aspects of the narrative that Ellen consciously decided not to include.

The 'Conclusion' discusses the overall findings of the textual analyses. It shows how a comparison of the various layers of text could not have been achieved, firstly, without an understanding of the subject, Frances Stewart, and, secondly, without an understanding of the person whose work reconstructed her, Ellen Dunlop. It reiterates how the focus on class, gender, and ethnicity of these two women facilitated the discussions on narrativity and meaning within the layers of writings. The 'Conclusion' also identifies several misrepresentations of Frances in various secondary published texts,

⁵¹ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #98, Frances Stewart to Maria Noble, 24 February 1823.

⁵² *OFH*, 1889, 24.

⁵³ *OFH*, 1902, 29.

her quotes having been taken invariably from *OFH*, and points, conversely, to the not always recognized value of *OFH* as an important historical artefact.



Frances Stewart (1794-1872)
Photo courtesy of the late Jean Shearman

Figure #1

Chapter 1

Frances Stewart, genteel pioneer: an examination of a life written and lived

*"Oh see all the wee marks where my pen wandered to & had a wee dance to itself tho' it is Sunday."*¹

An aged Frances Stewart to her granddaughter, Fanny Brown, 1 October 1871

However imperfectly we can see the past in the present, a detailed record of individual lives can advance our knowledge and understanding of history. A study of the social, educational, economic, political and cultural background of individuals can enhance the interpretation of historical documents, giving rise to an appreciation of the roles that individuals play in the building of nations. The nineteenth-century letters of pioneer Frances Stewart have enriched our knowledge and understanding of early colonial times in Upper Canada. They describe her struggles to maintain her social assumptions and values while adapting to the demanding circumstances of the new world, and offer vivid detail of the manner in which the Canadian society in which we live today was built.

There are many ways in which one might explore women's past lives through an examination of their writings. Roberta Hamilton argues that, although "language appears innocent, in that it appears simply as an instrument through which our ideas can be expressed, . . . [it, in fact] does not express our pre-existing thought, but actually shapes that thought."² She uses specific examples to show the manner in which commonly used words take on different meanings depending on various factors, including time, place, class, gender, ethnicity, age, etc., and "do not just say what they appear to say [but rather]

¹ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #223, Frances Stewart to Fanny Brown, 1 October 1871.

² Roberta Hamilton, *Gendering the Vertical Mosaic: Feminist Perspectives on Canadian Society*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Pearson, Prentice Hall, 2005) 26.

carry and create shifting identities, possibilities, and constraints.”³ In effect, Frances Stewart was created through the letters that she wrote and received, as words create meaning. Already fraught with ambiguity and nuance, words must be examined from the perspective of the past, so far as is possible, while understanding that they cannot ever be definitively interpreted. Frances writes, for example, about the Scottish family in Douro that worked “like Negros”⁴ and the “Indians” who were “inoffensive people and very lazy.”⁵ These and her comments about the “Southern Irish Catholics [who] are the worst, everywhere”⁶ reflect an intolerance of ethnic groups and a stance of superiority that must be carefully contextualized. The Irish Catholic/Protestant relations, for example, are complex and thorny. The “lazy” “Indians” comment is more aptly based on Frances’s observation of a landscape that included aboriginals, and whose lives and habits she found utterly alien, exotic, and “other.”⁷ Within the context of current postcolonial theory, her sentiments would reflect the now problematic Anglo-European perspective of white superiority; one must recognize the existence of the then-current eurocentric racial discourse. Frances was unquestionably curious about the lives of the natives that she met and she contrived ways to have them visit her. While postulating theories about her perspective, one must avoid reading from the vantage point of twenty-first century critical race theorizing. Laurel Ulrich affirms that “affinity and the distance between

³ Hamilton, 27.

⁴ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #197, Frances Stewart to Maria Waller, 7 December 1846.

⁵ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #90, Frances Stewart to Catherine Kirkpatrick, 23 July 1822.

⁶ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #197, Frances Stewart to Maria Waller, 7 December 1846.

⁷ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979). The aboriginals encountered by Frances are an example of the archetypal “other” identified by Edward Said in *Orientalism*. Frances exhibited the expected eurocentric perspective on aboriginal populations as uncivilized and child-like in her writings.

history and source”⁸ present many challenges relating to interpretation and reconstruction.

Joan Sangster advises against a blanket application of theory to women’s writings, stating that “the texture of the past must be unraveled by pulling out the relevant and historically specific threads of gender, race, and class relations, instead of placing theory, like a grid, over women’s actual experiences.”⁹ This advice is useful in that it allows for an examination of historical causality in shaping the ideologies surrounding class, gender, and ethnicity in any place or time, and permits stories to emerge from the evidence.

Helen Buss emphasizes gender as a parameter for studying first-person narrations:

I find that any consideration of what women in the past have written of their selves and their lives . . . must be placed in the context of what forms of showing and telling, what literary mapping techniques, have been available as means of expression. How women have worked inside these genres, bridged them, undermined them, tells me much about the conscious and unconscious selves of the writers.¹⁰

Buss’s mapping concept is intriguing. It is applicable to the examination of Frances’s writings since a great deal of outside information is available about her from a variety of sources, including the letters of others. The supplementary layers of perspective tell more about the “literary mapping techniques” that were available to her and provide a plausible base that can be used as one endeavours to interpret meaning from what she has written. These authors have all identified issues relating to meaning and text and their findings have implications for the study at hand.

⁸ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife’s Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812* (New York: Vintage, 1991) 34.

⁹ Joan Sangster, *Earning Respect: The Lives of Working Women in Small-Town Ontario, 1920-1960* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1995) 8.

¹⁰ Buss, 13.

By 1815, at the end of the Napoleonic war, much of Europe was entrenched in an economic depression, resulting in the impoverishment of the general population and a severe decline in the domestic linen industry. These factors, along with the gambling habits of John Stewart, the brother of Frances Stewart's husband, Tom (1786-1847), are believed to have contributed to the 1821 demise of the Stewart family linen and cotton business, White Abby Mills,¹¹ which had come to them as an inheritance from their father. Unable to recover his losses and not wanting to depend on others, Tom decided to move his family to Upper Canada. With the promise of a large land grant from the British government, he felt that emigrating would ensure the family's survival and independence. Though he was lame and thereby compromised in his ability to do strenuous physical labour, he was not to be dissuaded from emigrating by his concerned relatives and friends. Tom was comfortable in the knowledge that his able-bodied brother-in-law and the former bookkeeper of White Abby Mills, Robert Reid, had agreed to emigrate with him. Reid and his boys, ages nineteen, eight, and five, would help Tom clear his land and build his first log home. Years later he confirmed to Basil Hall that he made the decision to emigrate out of duty to his children.¹²

To the great advantage of the Stewarts, the British government, in attempting to address the problem of its excess officer complement in the aftermath of the Napoleonic war, was offering grants of land to those willing to move to Upper Canada. On the agenda of the government, too, was the desire to establish a gentry class in the colony.

¹¹ M. Wilson, niece of Thomas Alexander Stewart, refers to the linen and cotton mill owned by Thomas and his brother, John, as White Abby Mills, in an undated, typed copy of her memoirs located in the Jean Shearman fonds, TUA, 05-013.

¹² Basil Hall, *Travels in North America in the Years 1827 and 1827*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Printed for Robert Cadell, Edinburgh, and Simpkin and Marshall, London, 1830) 321. A letter dated 1828 from Thomas Alexander Stewart to Basil Hall is published in this book.

The War of 1812 had long been over, and the resulting movements of United Empire Loyalists north from America were creating what was believed to be an unstable cultural situation that required monitoring; the new American immigrants, although by all appearances supportive of the British Crown, were not all of British stock, and could not necessarily be trusted.

Marilyn Silverman writes that “a paternalistic style of gentry”¹³ was becoming the established norm in Europe during this period, a style that would fit the bill for a gentry ruling class in the developing colony. The gentry who were to settle in Upper Canada were an educated and refined people; they were interested in creating country estates similar to those owned by lesser landowners in Britain and they felt it their duty to establish their customs and manners in the colony. According to Michael Wagner, the male family heads were “retired officers on half-pay and gentlemen of moderate or fixed income whose status was endangered by a declining standard of living as a result of the post-war depression.”¹⁴ Tom represented the latter group, being a gentleman of a refined and cultured social class.¹⁵ As a result of a letter of introduction to Lieutenant-Governor Maitland from the colonial secretary, Lord Bathurst, with whom Tom had a personal connection through Frances’s relations, the Edgeworths, he was granted 1200 acres in Upper Canada on the east shore of the Otonabee River in Douro Township. Selena Crosson writes that “there was little demarcation between the “personal” and the “professional” in the colony, and [that] the government functioned through the

¹³ Marilyn Silverman, *An Irish Working Class: Explorations in Political Economy and Hegemony, 1800-1950* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2001) 7.

¹⁴ Michael J. Wagner, “Gentry Perception and Land Utilization in the Peterborough – Kawartha Lakes Region, 1818-1851.” (Masters thesis, U of Toronto, 1966) 1.

¹⁵ According to family oral tradition, the greatest sorrow in Tom’s life was his rejection by the army when he attempted to enlist to fight against Napoleon. He was rejected because he was lame. (Source of information: Mr. David Bate, Peterborough, 19 October 2005. Oral history narrated with the permission of Mr. Bate).

recommendations of “friendly” acquaintances.”¹⁶ Luckily, as well, Frances was heir to a small inheritance, paid out as annual stipends, and with this income to sustain them until such time as they could make a secure living in the new world, the family set out for Upper Canada.

On the morning of June 1st, 1822 and three years before Peter Robinson was to direct the first mass emigration of Irish working-class families to the Peterborough area, Thomas Alexander Stewart and Frances Browne Stewart, their three daughters, Anna, Ellen, and Bessy, and their two servants left Belfast aboard the brigantine *George*. Among the 118 immigrants on ship were Tom’s sister, Maria, her husband, Robert Reid, their 11 children, and the Reids’ former groom, John Baily, along with his wife and 5 children.¹⁷ The Stewarts had their French poodle, Cartouche, along and a cargo of farm implements and nails, china and cutlery, candlesticks, mattresses and blankets, and several boxes of books, including Tom’s complete set of Shakespeare’s plays.¹⁸

An examination of Frances’s life in Ireland provides the backdrop for the study of her later writings as an immigrant wife in Upper Canada. Those writings clearly reflect her class and gender and prove that she placed a far higher value on a cultured life than on one that merely guaranteed physical survival. After immigrating, she continued to identify with the relatives and friends that she left behind in Ireland, even though she was to live apart from them until her death half a century later. Born the second daughter of Reverend Francis Browne and Anna Maria Noble, Frances was separated from her birth family at the age of two when her father died and her invalid mother gave her over to the

¹⁶ Crosson, 100.

¹⁷ Lewis, “From Douro to Dublin: The Letters of Frances Stewart,” 6. Slightly different figures are given in *Portraits: Peterborough Area Women Past and Present*, p. 69. The Reids may have had a servant, and the Baily, only four children, instead of 5.

¹⁸ Thomas Alexander Stewart’s set of Shakespeare’s plays is located at TUA, 02-017.

care of her great-uncle, Robert Waller, of Allenstown House¹⁹ in County Meath, in mid-eastern Ireland. Frances's primary caregiver was a cousin, a niece of Robert Waller, who came to live in the home as housekeeper, and who subsequently became mother, mentor, and governess to her distant cousin. For more than sixty years, Harriet Beaufort regarded Frances a daughter, and continued to counsel her via her letters, long after the two were parted forever when Frances left for Upper Canada. A published letter in *OFH* for which, unfortunately, there is no apparent original, reveals Harriet's attitude in carrying on her guardianship role into Frances's adulthood. The letter written in the months leading up to Frances's marriage to Tom in 1816, advises, "at your age you require no governess or direction, but sometimes a friend will remind you and point out something to you which might have escaped your consideration. And indeed you are so docile, so reasonable, and take advice so kindly, that you induce me perhaps to continue in the old way."²⁰

Harriet was well educated and a published author²¹, and proceeded to raise her protégé in a manner and style that reflected her Anglo-Irish protestant sensibilities. Religion and education were of paramount importance, and under Harriet's instruction, Frances received tutelage in the Bible, in French and Italian, music, chemistry, botany, mathematics, and in classical and contemporary literature. Harriet was staunchly attentive

¹⁹ Allenstown House was a large mansion built in 1730 by the Waller family. It was demolished in 1938.

²⁰ *OFH*, 1889, ix.

²¹ Harriet Beaufort published several children's books anonymously or under a nome de plume and this would explain why a search for her works does not yield results. Ann Shteir writes that Harriet's book, *Dialogues on Botany* (1819), was sometimes mistakenly attributed to Maria Edgeworth. Harriet's sister, Louisa Beaufort, also published a book anonymously in 1819, *Dialogues on Entomology* (see Ann B. Shteir's *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science: Flora's Daughters and Botany in England, 1760-1860* (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1996) 93-95). According to Joyce Lewis, a later publication, *Bertha's Journal* (1829), includes excerpts from Frances's letters (see Joyce C. Lewis's "From Douro to Dublin: The Letters of Frances Stewart." Occasional Paper 14 (Peterborough: Peterborough Historical Society, 1994) 22).

to Frances's welfare as shown in the following passage written to her when she was 18 years of age:

Take care every day to be attentive & considerate . . . I hope you adhere to the custom of reading a little French or Italian after they leave the parlour after dinner. . . . Be steady about the time that you now ought to be devoting to acquiring knowledge . . . You are shockingly lazy . . . I suppose when you have done the Iliad you will be glad to continue the thread in the Odyssey. . . . Succeed in whatever you attempt – which you are perfectly equal to, with a little regular perseverance.²²

We know from several letters that Frances drew the ire of her relatives at an early age for showing an impertinent manner, a characteristic suggesting that she was spoiled, having been sheltered and catered to. Harriet's brother, Francis Beaufort, reveals his concern in the following excerpt: "I have learned from various people, some of whom you may guess, that as you grow up and as your mind opens you increase in a certain quality called Pertness, this my dear little girl is what occasions me so much unhappiness at present, and if it was only to lessen that and thereby to oblige me I am sure you will endeavour to conquer this very bad habit."²³ Harriet's letters persistently lean towards keeping Frances on a straight and narrow path. Nevertheless, as a youngster, Frances sometimes found herself the focus of apprehension not of her own doing. She witnessed the Dublin Riots while on visit to Dublin to have teeth extracted in 1804, causing great alarm in the family. Fortunately, she was not harmed and returned safely to Allenstown. That such an event would leave an indelible mark on Frances's 10-year-old mind is certain.

Frances's father was a graduate of Trinity College in Dublin, and at the time of his premature death in 1796, he was the Church of Ireland's Dean of Elphin and author of several unpublished religious works. After he died and Frances was adopted into the

²² Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #70, Harriet Beaufort to Frances Stewart, 3 December 1812.

²³ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #59, Francis Beaufort to Frances Browne [Stewart], 13 October 1805.

Waller family, Church of England religious influences continued to figure strongly in her life, especially under the careful instruction and example of Harriet. Frances's mother, an invalid, though absent, also counseled her daughter through correspondence on matters of religion, education, and etiquette until her death in 1809. Other learned relatives, too, were influential in Frances's life. Harriet's father had been a founding member of the Royal Irish Academy and her brother, Sir Francis Beaufort, a British hydrographer, was the inventor of a wind-measurement instrument called the Beaufort Scale which is still used today. He also had the Beaufort Sea named after him and received an honorary doctorate at Oxford alongside William Wordsworth. Richard Edgeworth, Harriet's brother-in-law, organized plays and other literary activities for the education of his 19 children, one of whom, Maria, was to become a widely published author. Frances began her commonplace book²⁴ of poems and literary excerpts while on a visit to the Edgeworths, and continued to add to it for many decades. Several of the letters written to Frances in Upper Canada reflect unwavering commitment to her; she is always encouraged to continue to educate herself and to stay true to her Church of England upbringing, especially in surroundings which were initially devoid of church and pastor. Further to the commitment of her loved ones, the annual box sent out from Ireland always included an assortment of academic and religious books and journals.

The voyage to Upper Canada from Ireland immediately presented Frances with a backdrop profoundly different from that under which the genteel immigrant had been

²⁴ Frances Stewart's commonplace book is located at TUA, 98-005. It is thought to include some poems written in the hands of Richard and Maria Edgeworth. It also includes poems by Mary Traill, [daughter of Catharine Parr Traill], and one of Susanna Moodie's poems, "The Canadian Woodsman," copied over at Auburn in August 1842 and appearing to be in Frances's hand. Many of the entries focus on loneliness, and the death of children. According to Cinthia Gannett, the commonplace book is an "early ancestor to the journals of readings, quotes, observations, notes, and drafts that educated people, particularly scholars, writers, and artists, have kept for centuries." (Gannett, 109).

raised. Sleeping arrangements aboard ship meant that she would share her cabin with her three daughters and the maid, while Tom took a cabin with the Reid family. Frances seems to have liked these arrangements, saying, "I am very comfortable here & quite independent, & though I have only room to stand up & dress myself I am much happier than if we were all together."²⁵ Frances suffered chronic asthma and headaches, and may have carefully arranged for the most comfortable crossing possible. Seasickness, however, was a matter not so easily accommodated. She notes in a letter composed from her journal, "we are beginning to rock about so much that I must stop writing – though not sick I have had some bad headaches & am sometimes stupefied & unable to fix my eyes on anything."²⁶

Frances's acknowledgement of the class differences she experienced en route is revealed in her offhand comment that the captain is "just what you might expect to find a person who was raised from being a common sailor,"²⁷ although she tempers this criticism by recognizing that "he is anxious to pay us every attention in his power & is very good natured to the children."²⁸ That Frances perceived herself a member of a higher class is obvious. According to Marilyn Silverman, "status-class hierarchy underlay people's experiences, forming the bedrock of their common sense, their individual consciousness, and their personal and collective perceptions."²⁹ Frances may well have acquiesced to the fact that her social space was to be encroached upon by more plebian elements, although a short time after settling in Upper Canada she commented in a letter

²⁵ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #91, Frances Stewart to Harriet Beaufort, 1 July 1822.

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ Silverman, 7.

that at least in having contact with such gentry as the Rubidges,³⁰ she “need not entirely give up Society.”³¹ Frances sometimes did set foot across murky class boundaries, however, writing, for example, a long and newsy letter later in life to her former servant, Betty, tenderly inviting the widow to return to Canada from Ireland. She offered to pay her passage and told her that her own son, William, would give her a place at his home to care for his “chickens and children.”³² Immigrants often found themselves uncommonly connected with classes of people with whom they would have had very little to do in their home countries but upon whom they relied in the new world, occasionally for companionship and friendship, and, more often, for help in matters relating to basic survival. Neil Forkey explains the shared experiences of nineteenth-century immigrants in terms of how they saw their relationship to the land, corroborating the idea of a common thread relating to the matter of survival. He writes, “when the newcomers stood at the threshold of the forest in the first half of the nineteenth century, . . . [their] vision was one of creating homes and a secure community on the forest frontier.”³³ Granted, not all immigrants had equal opportunity to fulfill their dreams. However, for the very sake of survival, social networks became intertwined and class boundaries were sometimes unavoidably crossed. Regardless of class and economic circumstances, immigrants shared many of the same primary responsibilities and experienced aspects of pioneer life in comparable fashion. The women became pregnant, gave birth, nursed, and nurtured. As wives and mothers, they were caregivers; they ran households, carried out strenuous

³⁰ Captain Charles Rubidge was a land agent who assisted Peter Robinson in settling the Irish immigrants in Peterborough in 1825. He also assisted other immigrant groups in 1831 and 1839 and was appointed Peterborough's Immigrant Agent by Lord Seaton, Governor-General of Canada, in 1831.

³¹ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #105, Frances Stewart to Maria Waller 14 December 1822.

³² Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #210a, Frances Stewart to Betty Taylor, 6 June 1851.

³³ Neil S. Forkey, *Shaping the Upper Canadian Frontier: Environment, Society, and Culture in the Trent Valley* (Calgary: U of Calgary P, 2003) 26.

and repetitive daily tasks both inside and outside the home, and they shared the joys and sorrows associated with bearing children and raising a family. On the whole, however, Frances held tightly to views that differentiated her from people of lower classes, as is confirmed in every single letter that she wrote.

Having been raised in the company of relatives who had invested a great deal in her education, Frances knew that her descriptions of the flora and fauna would be keenly received in Ireland. Her knowledge of botany, especially, allowed her to make reasonably reliable scientific observations, and vivid depictions of flora and fauna intersperse her writings. Indeed, the comparisons that she made with species from her homeland may have contributed to a sense of connection with the land and people that she had left behind. She writes, for instance:

In the very middle of the Atlantic we were accompanied by little birds of the swallow tribe but webfooted. They are called Mother Carey's chickens & are very pretty little birds. . . . About a week ago a little bird was found in one of the boats - & I took it to nurse as it proved to be a land bird & we were not near land at the time. It is very like our grey linnet but the Bill is very long & crosses over at the point like the crossbill. I have kept it in a basket, it is going on very well & is so tame that it eats out of our hands & sits on our shoulders. Yesterday it sat on my head all the time I was at dinner - It is a dear little thing but does not attempt song.³⁴

As with her description of the birds above, Frances's astute observations of trees and flowers and plants are written in a language that reflects her appreciation and love of the natural surroundings, and it is obvious in many passages that she derived enormous comfort from her environment. But a few years after she arrived in Upper Canada, Harriet and Maria Edgeworth entertained the idea of publishing Frances's astonishing

³⁴ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #91, Frances Stewart to Harriet Beaufort, 1 July 1822.

depictions of her new life, but decided against doing so on the grounds that this would constitute an invasion of privacy.³⁵

After a stay of several months in Cobourg in a house which was “as nasty & inconvenient a little cage inside as ever was,”³⁶ the Stewarts moved to the yet-to-be-surveyed township of Douro, approximately 40 kilometres north of Cobourg. They arrived at their unfinished log home by horse and sleigh on the night of February 11th, 1823. The letters reveal that, during the early years, even though they faced enormous challenges, they at least had access to several varieties of food, items that would have been unavailable to most other settlers. Frances writes that the merchant son of Mrs. Bethune³⁷ of Cobourg had taken it upon himself to help her family by ensuring ready access to a commercial supply of imported foods under his authority. According to Frances, the son “is proprietor of the largest store here & is unusually kind to us, is always sending us things & insists on supplying us with provisions for winter such as Salt Pork, Butter, Pease, &c at the same price he buys them himself.”³⁸ That the Stewarts had money to purchase food, especially in the years before they were able to provide for themselves adequately through farming, was crucial to their survival. The important class connection with the Bethune family had implications for their survival and the level of comfort that they were able to attain. Frances refers to local purchases of barley, rice, potatoes, beef, mutton, bacon, buttermilk, milk, and bread.³⁹ Faunal remains found during an archaeological dig directed by Mary Lucyk Heaman in 1973 of the initial log house

³⁵ Elizabeth Jane Birch, “Picking Up New Threads for Kathleen Mavourneen: the Irish Female Presence in Nineteenth-Century Ontario.” (Masters thesis, Trent U, 1998, c.1997) appendix ii.

³⁶ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #94, Frances Stewart to Maria Waller, 30 October 1822.

³⁷ Mrs. Bethune moved to Cobourg, Newcastle District, from New York about 1817, a few years after the death of her husband, Reverend John Bethune.

³⁸ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #94, Frances Stewart to Maria Waller, 30 October 1822.

³⁹ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #97, Frances Stewart journal, 14 January 1823.

confirm pork, beef, fowl, and wildlife consumption.⁴⁰ The family was well off by pioneer standards and, from the beginning, had the means to augment the food that they produced themselves with purchases of local foods and imports from Great Britain, in the early years from Cobourg, as mentioned, and in later years, in Peterborough. They also received imported food directly from Ireland sent out by relatives in an annual commission. Further supplements included venison and fish acquired through trade with the native people and additional farm produce obtained through contracts with tenant farmers on their land.

The Reids concurrently built their home approximately one mile from the Stewarts; reserved lands separated their properties. Evidence reveals that the sisters-in-law seldom traveled the short distance to visit each other. Other family members socialized, however, a contingent of Reids dining each Sunday with the Stewarts, and the children going back and forth, especially when their labour was required. Pioneer women, as in the case of Frances and Maria, may not have had much freedom or opportunity to socialize, but one might speculate that the two women and their families had quite different aspirations about their positions in society. Although Frances never makes disparaging remarks about Maria and when mentioning her directly, only speaks in a favourable manner, her opinions about education were fundamentally different from those of the Reids, and this may possibly be indicative of major differences in the two women's views and the fact that they did not visit back and forth. Irish immigrants retained "much of the traditional social structure and communal consciousness"⁴¹ upon

⁴⁰ Mary Lucyk Heaman, "Auburn Excavation Preliminary Report," Peterborough: Borden Site Designation: BbGn-1 (Unpublished paper, 1973) 65.

⁴¹ John J. Mannion, *Irish Settlements in Eastern Canada: A Study of Cultural Transfer and Adaptation* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1974) 173.

resettlement in Upper Canada, according to John Mannion. Sydney Bellingham (1808-1900), a relation to the Stewart family by marriage who visited the Stewarts and Reids in 1824, reports that Robert Reid was “not an admirer of the aristocracy” and “prided himself on the dignity of labour,” while Tom “had led a life of luxury and knew nothing of hard labour.”⁴² That such a perception of the two was considered obvious and worthy of mention in Bellingham’s memoir gives this comparison some credibility. The Shearman sisters, however, are skeptical of Bellingham’s account of the visit, in general, writing, “[it] was written many years later when he was an elderly man so it may have been clouded in retrospect.”⁴³ Frances was alarmed that the Reids made little effort to educate their children, allowing them to grow up as uneducated farmers. She struggled to give her children an upbringing reflective of her own beliefs and values and abhorred the thought of them being raised in the same manner as the Reid children. In her journal in 1826, in obvious despair that the Reids had forsaken education for farming, she writes,

The land will do no one no good, unless it is cultivated and in order to have it cultivated the land holders must either spend a great deal of money or else work hard and make all his family work hard too. This is what the Reids do, but they neglect everything else, in manners learning and appearance they are exactly a labouring family – this I cannot bear for my poor dear Children. . . . If we go on here as we have done, I know we shall live to the extent of our income, without much comfort and seeing our children vulgar and illiterate.⁴⁴

Harriet, ever attentive, was determined to support Frances’s effort to educate her family and supplied her with useful texts via the annual box sent out from Ireland. She pressed Frances to make time to teach her children amid the hustle and bustle of running the household, saying, “I sent over a few little books for these dear children, & indeed I am growing very anxious to hear that they can read well & then write – you say nothing of

⁴² Sydney Bellingham fonds, TUA, 69-1003, Sydney Bellingham memoirs, [spring 1824]. Photocopy.

⁴³ Hall and Shearman, 67.

⁴⁴ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #269, Frances Stewart to Harriet Beaufort, 27 May 1826.

arithmetic. . . . I am very sorry your hurry interferes with your teaching of them – but could you not continue to fix on even half an hour at a regular time to instruct them.”⁴⁵

Although compromised in her ability to provide the life she wanted for her children, it was, nevertheless, of utmost importance to Frances to separate her family from the labouring class through education, manners and appearance reflective of her own experience. Silverman’s claim that class awareness is a response to “those commonplace, routine, and mundane beliefs and practices that people uncritically espouse”⁴⁶ fits well Frances’s elemental assumptions about education and manners. Ironically, for Frances, it is conceivable that time spent on education may have contributed to the fact that the family never prospered financially. (The Reids, on the other hand, flourished, and several went on to professional careers, having learned the value of hard work). Harriet, ever cautioning Frances on matters of gentility, perceived the very notion of work as a threat. She writes: “see that you keep your elegant & civilized tastes in the midst of your present hard working life.”⁴⁷ That Frances continued to be influenced by Harriet’s guidance through a regular succession of letters from Ireland is worth bearing in mind, as Harriet maintained control through repetitive and weighty expressions of concern and worry.

Almost all Frances’s references to household matters pertain to divisions of labour rather than give any detail of the particular tasks performed.⁴⁸ For example, one is forced to draw inferences about her culinary experiences from the silences around this

⁴⁵ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #121, Harriet Beaufort to Frances Stewart, 26 July 1826.

⁴⁶ Silverman, 485.

⁴⁷ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #103, Harriet Beaufort to Frances Stewart, 23 November 1823.

⁴⁸ Some of the references to food in this chapter appear in “Culinary Themes in the Writings of Frances Stewart, Genteel Pioneer of Douro Township,” an article by the author published in *Culinary Chronicles: The Newsletter of the Culinary Historians of Ontario*, Autumn 2005, Number 46.

subject rather than from anything concrete that she says. The following passage is as close as one gets to a discussion about food preparation methods:

One night my poor little maid Betty slipped on the ice at the back door, fell & broke one of her ribs in two places as her side came against the handle of a tub.... I was able to get a Scotch lassie to come to cook & finish the washing – but she could only stay two days, & after that I was cook, nurse, & everything myself for a few days – We had luckily a fine round of Beef which lasted cold for almost the whole time, so I had no cooking except boiling potatoes, & I got on finely & had neither fatigue or hurry of any consequence.⁴⁹

In *OFH*, Ellen confirms that her mother was not normally the cook. She writes, “as the maid was laid up for some time, [my mother] had to cook and, never having done so before, she was obliged to refer to her cookery-book for directions.”⁵⁰ One detects a proud note in Ellen’s statement. The claim that Frances only cooked when necessary holds consistent with middle-class sensibilities. Of course, Frances must have prepared food on numerous occasions, but she had no interest in detailing or discussing the topic; rather, she focused on subjects relating to nature and to her family and their daily activities, subjects that would be of interest to the class-conscious recipients of her letters. The letters reveal that her daughters, in contrast, became proficient cooks; this is exemplified by passages that have them preparing menu items for elaborate family wedding feasts as they became older.

Frances was mindful of the paradox that she faced in trying to maintain an outward appearance reflective of her class. With regard to manner of dress, she writes to Harriet, “I have just made up a grand assortment of caps with the lace borders or quillings – I hate to be caught untidy at home. . . . I have great deal of work to do, such as Baking & other such operations not fit for a pretty gown, on these occasions I wear one of my

⁴⁹ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #98, Frances Stewart to Maria Noble, 24 February 1823.

⁵⁰ *OFH*, 1902, 19.

Sprig wrappers.”⁵¹ Misao Dean studied pioneer women’s labour and examined it particularly in relation to femininity. She points to the fact that femininity, out of necessity, had to be redefined for pioneer women. She looks at Traill and Moodie, contemporaries of Frances, and argues that the two women, despite the so-called demeaning physical work that they did, were held in high regard by those who read their books, due to the fact that they were seen to be contributing to the very survival of their husbands and children. Because of the sheer volume of work in a pioneer home, settler women had to perform hard physical tasks, even if they were so fortunate as to have servants. Dean suggests that the British acceptance of the publications by Traill and Moodie shows that the “extraordinary strength and persistence”⁵² of the two women was a qualifier that allowed them to maintain their class status while performing manual labour more commonly considered appropriate to the working class. That the two women would sacrifice so much for their families was perceived as commendable. According to Barbara Maas, such sacrifices provided settler women with “new sources for prestige which enabled them to relinquish former patterns of female prestige,”⁵³ and that this, in turn, effected positive changes in self-image.

Like Traill and Moodie, Frances wrote about the onerous daily tasks that she performed, all the while tempering her letters with acceptance, appreciation and resignation. That she was proud of the tangible results of her labour is evident. She writes, “oh I am become a famous Tailor – I have just made up a nice pair of Frize pantaloons for Tom - & I am to make him a waistcoat of the same material . . . he is so

⁵¹ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #96, Frances Stewart to Harriet Beaufort, 10 November 1822.

⁵² Misao Dean, *Practising Femininity: Domestic Realism and the Performance of Gender in Early Canadian Fiction* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1998) 23.

⁵³ Maas, 117.

fond of this frize that he is determined to have a whole suit.”⁵⁴ Frances knew that she walked a tightrope when revealing to her upper-middle-class correspondents that she performed tasks normally considered labourers’ occupations. It was important that they understand that she had maintained her class sensibilities despite the fact that she performed tasks directly related to the physical survival of her family. She always wrote of the tasks without complaining, glossing over the details while still baring her soul to her readers. Her family and friends were awe-inspired by Frances’s accounts of her life and consistently commented on her ability to maintain a cheerful countenance under such demanding and laborious circumstances.

Frances seems to have seen her own life, too, as a remarkable testament. In a language couched within the constraints of her humble demeanor, she writes,

Indeed all my pursuits are so completely changed that I scarcely can help thinking I have been changed by some Evil Fairy – for no people could be so totally different as Fanny Browne of Dublin & Fanny Stewart of Douro – Except that my dear friends are the same - & equally fond & tender Oh this makes me know most exquisitely that I am Fanny Browne still.⁵⁵

Like all upper-middle-class immigrants, Frances exhibits a radical ambivalence. She is aware of her double identity, torn between pride at her perseverance and fortitude and in her newly learned accomplishments and, and shame and humiliation at having to do such work at all. According to David Gerber, “immigrants have always risked a radical rupture of the self, a break in their understandings of who they are.”⁵⁶ Frances’s passage poignantly reveals that she viewed her physical household tasks in sharp contrast to pursuits that she enjoyed most. It also reveals that, by 1829, she was envisioning herself a

⁵⁴ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #114, Frances Stewart to Harriet Beaufort, [] February 1824. Frize is coarsely woven woolen cloth with a shaggy nap on one side.

⁵⁵ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #131, Frances Stewart to Honora Edgeworth Beaufort, 6 April 1829.

⁵⁶ Gerber, *Authors of Their Lives*, 3.

survivor, viewing her life from an objective stance and within the new delineations of the changed social and physical environment in which she lived. The testament reveals, too, that through time Frances had overcome or at least come to recognize the risk identified by Gerber, and could view herself objectively, and with a sense of humour, to boot.

The Stewarts' first year in Upper Canada was sadly marred by the death of their youngest child, Bessy. Frances reported this news to Harriet, telling her, "our lovely little Bessy – it has pleased the Almighty to take her heavenly little soul to himself. . . . The Lord gave & the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."⁵⁷ Faith is directly drawn upon as a means of coping in times of sadness, and, later in life, Frances reflected upon the meaning of faith in this context, writing to her granddaughter:

How pleasant it is if one's mind is anxious or troubled about any thing to remember that the Lord knows all our sorrows and troubles, and feels for us and with us – more even than our dearest friends can – and we can trust Him without any fear of His forsaking us or deceiving us – this is trusting in the Lord - & if we ask Him in prayers to help us and to give us patience & faith – we will be able to "wait patiently" to see what He will bring for us or how He will help us out of our trouble – Trusting in Him gives us Rest in our mind.⁵⁸

After Bessy's death, eight more children were born to the Stewarts, one of whom they again named Bessy, in memory of their departed child. Very little information is divulged in Frances's letters concerning her many pregnancies. This is not surprising as such silences follow convention, but even members of her family in Ireland amusedly scolded her for not having mentioned the birth of one of her children till half way through a letter:

And behold there was a real treasure, a copy of your letter with an account of the birth of your dear child, but my dear, we really could hardly help laughing at your beginning your letter so composed telling of common occurrences, & then nearly at the bottom of the page, comes a paragraph of how the lady of T A Stewart Esq had a Daughter! Really it put me in mind of a history of some travellers in some

⁵⁷ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #102, Frances Stewart to Catherine Kirkpatrick, 24 October 1823.

⁵⁸ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #222, Frances Stewart to Frances Stewart Brown, 17 November 1869.

hot country, who missed one of their females for an hour, but she came up at last with a Bairn in her arms, whose birth had delayed her.⁵⁹

Frances found solace in reading and writing and often lamented her lack of time for these activities, complaining that she was torn in too many directions in having to meet the duties of housewife and mother, while managing and helping the hired hands and servants under her supervision. In one letter, she writes, “whilst I write Bessy is jumping on the sofa behind me and catching my shoulders and then springing round me on the table – Willy is creeping about my feet and trying to climb up by holding the leg of the table,”⁶⁰ and in another, “some times I am almost in despair about being able to do any thing but nurse or fuss a little about the children or housekeeping – then when I have time I write in such a hurry that I have no comfort.”⁶¹ She also despaired at not having time to further her education, lamenting, “I scarcely can have even one half hour for serious reading – I am forgetting everything I knew & not gaining any new ideas – except upon housekeeping.”⁶² Family and housework conspired to limit the activities that she enjoyed most.

Frances’s references to her children are as with mothers everywhere. She frequently writes of having trouble keeping her comments about them short and modest. In 1826, her young charges were “great wild racing creatures - Anna is up to my shoulders, Ellen about a head lower, Bessy very amusing and engaging - Willy a great stout laughing fellow.”⁶³ Decades later, she avows, “I think you would love these dear

⁵⁹ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #115, M. Waller to Frances Stewart, 20 March 1824.

⁶⁰ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #269, Frances Stewart to Harriet Beaufort, 27 May 1826.

⁶¹ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #131, Frances Stewart to Honora Edgeworth Beaufort, 6 April 1829.

⁶² Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #122, Frances Stewart to Maria Waller, 2 August 1826.

⁶³ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #269, Frances Stewart to Harriet Beaufort, 27 May 1826.

children of mine if you knew them.”⁶⁴ As with any large family, there were illnesses, scandals, financial woes, weddings, and the arrival of grandchildren as her daughters and sons begat a new generation. Evidence suggests that mother and grandmother stoically took this all in stride. One can never know the ways in which Frances conducted her daily life in relationship to her children as they grew and had families of their own. One knows only through their letters that they cared for her tremendously, and, the fact that they put such effort into gathering her letters from Ireland for publication is testimony of their love for her, in and of itself. Frances, herself, attests to their affection, writing, “I have had a severe [asthma] attack lately, which required care & I felt the affection & kindness of my dear children more than ever.”⁶⁵

Along with their own large family, Frances and Tom raised two orphaned brothers, Robert and Edward Brown, who were connected to the Stewart side of the family through a friendship between the boys’ late father and the husband of one of Tom’s first cousins. The brothers were eventually to marry two of the Stewart daughters. Frances experienced a very lonely period when the children all married and moved out on their own, especially after Edward married Bessy in 1848. She makes surprising comparisons of the two boys to her own sons:

I have always attended to their [the Brown boys’] clothes & had their washing & sewing done here – ever since they have been with us, so that when their trunks – boxes – brushes &c. & &c were all taken away – it seems a complete emptying of the rooms upstairs – On Sunday too I missed my three dear children terribly – for they were my constant companions in any leisure hours - & were fonder of being with me than any of my sons – we used to walk & talk & sit together, Bessie, Ted, Bob & I, & were more like brothers & sisters than Mother & children – All last winter I used to long for Wednesdays & Saturdays, as on those evenings Edw’d always come, & he & Bee & I had such sociable evenings - & when I was

⁶⁴ Frances Stewart correspondence, TRL, Baldwin Room, S215 A, Frances Stewart to Mary [], 3 January 1852.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

overcome with low spirits he used always advise & sooth & comfort me - or if I was in any dilemma about the farm or the boys, he always put things right & I felt sure that if he saw anything wrong or neglected about the place he w'd see that & put it right - indeed I have always had a feeling of safety & security whenever Edward was with us, for many years back. Now of course I must relinquish much of this, for having an establishment of his own, he cannot be so often here - & not having his little Sweet heart to come to, he will not be so anxious to come over, & having her there, I cannot think of his leaving her. My dear William is exceedingly careful & really shews much discretion & judgement in attending to everything so that in fact, we do not require Edward so much in that way - but not one of my boys are companions so much to my fancy as dear Bessie, Edward & Robert. I think Robert will sometimes come & keep me company . . . Frank cannot settle his mind to work at home & is trying to push himself forward on his own farm - I cannot blame him as he is 21 - & he wants to be independent - he is a fine active pleasant fellow - very much like his dear Papa in his character & ways. Johnny is a steady hard working lad . . . he has many good points, but is awfully selfish & old batchelorish in his ways & particularities. Frank is the pleasantest companion of any of the boys, but he scarcely ever is at home, & never seems to care for any of his own family - he is now staying at the Browns - we are obliged to keep Charlie from School which will be a terrible loss to him as we require him to help on the farm - he too is but weakly as he has had Ague & is growing very fast - you see now my dear why I have been low spirited since I lost those three - who were everything to me.⁶⁶

Frances considered the two Browns loving companions and felt that she could depend on them. Her own sons, on the other hand, gave her ample cause for worry, and she was discouraged that they paid her little attention. Nevertheless, they were a source of personal pride, as the following passage reveals:

Even in Toronto George & Charlie seem to inherit the regard & interest of many in the highest classes there, who were acquainted with their dear father & who till lately we had little or no idea of recollecting us. They have proved themselves kind friends to the sons of one who possessed their respect & esteem, & where memory is still revered & cherished in their hearts. This is very gratifying to me.⁶⁷

Written 32 years after she immigrated, such a statement provides unmistakable evidence of Frances's deep-rooted class-consciousness, and pride.

⁶⁶ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #205, Frances Stewart to Catherine Kirkpatrick, 31 May 1848.

⁶⁷ Stewart fonds, TUA, 92-1002, Letter #1, Frances Stewart to unknown, 1 August 1854.

Frances lived much of her widowed life in the homes of her daughters after giving up Auburn, the second-built Stewart home, in 1851, four years after Tom's death. She relinquished the property to her oldest son, William, who was living with her and operating the farm with his new wife. She writes, obviously amid some differences with him:

I have always observed that it never does well for two families to live together and therefore I had made up my mind to make a separation As long as I resided at Auburn & kept the name of mistress, I know Willey would take no interest or care of the place – he has good taste & cleverness enough, but he is indolent in some things, & likes to attend to the quarry better than the farm. . . . I thought my best plan to give all up to him & let him make the most of it & have the benefit of it to himself.⁶⁸

A few years after William's death in 1864, Auburn passed out of the Stewart family as a result of some undisclosed fraudulent dealings involving close family associates. This matter is discussed at greater length in Chapter 2 in relation to the inference from one source that Ellen's husband, Charles, may have been implicated in this matter at some level.

Except for some angst over Ellen, Frances's relationships with her daughters seem to have been less fraught with worry. Anna was steadfast and dependable and assumed responsibility for many household duties as she grew older. Ellen was warm, affectionate and unselfish, but suffered from unknown illness and depression, and was frequently under the care of a physician. Bessy was the pet, having been born on the heels of baby Bessy's death, and Kate was witty and "always rattling away at some fun or nonsense."⁶⁹ Naturally, Frances was attentive to her daughters as they married and began having children of their own. Her comments, in line with conventions of the period, deal little

⁶⁸ Stewart correspondence, TRL, Baldwin Room, S215 A, Frances Stewart to Maria [], 25 August 1851.

⁶⁹ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-007, Letter #215a, Frances Stewart to Mary Martha Noble Sutton, 10 November 1856.

with details of pregnancy, labour and delivery. In one instance, she writes: "I suppose you have heard of my poor Bessies 3rd disappointment – this was the most severe, as all would have been right if the poor infant could have been restored, but tho' it did breathe for an hour & half, it was too far gone to recover, some difficulty having delayed in its Birth," and later in the same letter, "I am every day expecting to hear of Anna Hay having an addition to her flock. I saw her yesterday looking well, her three children all well & full of heart & glee & making tremendous noise, racing & laughing."⁷⁰

A strong mutual bond developed between Frances and many of her grandchildren. Her letters to them are affectionate and time and again convey words of wisdom relating to religion and education. She uses many of the same approaches that her own guardian, Harriet, used, asking questions about mathematics and nature and religious works and requesting feedback by return letter. An aging Frances movingly positions herself in the role of old and loving "Grandma" in the following passage written to a granddaughter on Christmas day, 1869:

I have been some weeks intending to write to you, so that you should have my good wishes and loving remembrance on this day – but I have not been very well for sometime nor in very good spirits – and you know people cannot write cheerful or pleasant letters – unless they feel quite well and happy – One cause of my feeling dull was having been disappointed in my wish to send you all my very dear little Grandchildren – some little presents, but I found I could not manage it ... though I have not been able to send you presents or to prove the truth of my words I am always your very loving Grandma.⁷¹

That Frances established deep and trusting relationships with some of her grandchildren is exemplified in many letters. The following passage is delightful in its show of humour as she struggled to keep her mind to the task of writing in the last year of her life:

⁷⁰ Stewart correspondence, TRL, Baldwin Room, S215 A, Frances Stewart to [aunt], 7 October 1851.

⁷¹ Stewart fonds, TUA, 92-1002 Letter #9, Frances Stewart to Harriette [Brown], 25 December 1869.

Oh dear I was asleep just when I was writing the words "to hear" in the 4th line back - & I dreamed that some one said "Rolley has gone to Washington to see the President! & to be examined for the new situation" – I was just thinking why he went off so far & did not come to say Goodbye when I awoke - & now I will stop as I have been asleep again – Goodbye dear Ever your own Grannie Oh see all the wee marks where my pen wandered to & had a wee dance to itself tho' it is Sunday.⁷²

This passage is testimony to the easy relationship that Frances had with one of her granddaughters, and is symbolic of her humble deportment as she struggled to maintain and nurture her relationships through her letter writing to the end of her life.

Another important element of Frances's life that requires careful examination is her relationship with Tom. While considering the one-sidedness of the material available for research, the letters, at first glance, give the impression of mutual trust, respect and dependency. Early on, Frances writes of Tom's efforts to provide her with every possible comfort as they struggled to begin a new life in a challenging and unfamiliar environment. It is apparent that she deeply respected the strength of character that he manifested as he conducted his arduous daily activities, and that his firm religious bearing gave her comfort and a sense of security. However, close scrutiny reveals evidence of marital discord. Frances did not fully agree with the decision to move to Upper Canada, although she admired Tom's reasons for doing so, and felt duty-bound once the decision had been made to concur with his plans. She writes,

I now wish and so does Tom that we had taken the advice of our friends and not emigrated so hastily – but it can't be helped now – I argued and reasoned and entreated Tom as much as I could, before we came but his mind was bent on it and nothing would change it and I thought my duty then was to yield – he thought right to come to Canada to try his fortune and he never would have been happy if he had not done so. . . . Tom did not think it right to separate from Mr Reid's family and for them the woods were the best – but there is no use now in giving

⁷² Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #223, Frances Stewart to Frances Stewart Brown, 1 October 1871.

way to useless regrets - he did so from kindness of his brothinlaw's [*sic*] family and that was a good motive.⁷³

That Frances was a devoted and obedient housewife is clear. She fits well Jane Errington's description of Upper-Canadian society's ideal woman. Errington writes, "first and foremost, to be a good wife, a woman had to be a "good" woman. This meant that she had to be a devout Christian. Women were advised to "labour under the grace of God," to study the Scriptures and to apply them in their daily activities. A good wife had to be "amiable," with "goodness of heart and purity of manners" so as to be able to "impart a moral excellence to all around her."⁷⁴ Complementary to Errington's analysis of the ideal Upper Canadian woman, Barbara Maas attributes such gendered assumptions and expectations to the Victorian era in which they flourished. She says, "British-born women had fully internalized that part of the Victorian code of womanhood which declared marriage as woman's highest destiny and wifely obedience as woman's foremost duty within marriage."⁷⁵ Frances may have breached this code in 1826, a few years prior to the Victorian era proper, by writing to Harriet's brother, Francis Beaufort, on an undisclosed matter relating to difficulties that she chose not to share with Tom. However, while devaluing her own feelings, she assumes responsibility for Tom's inevitable unhappiness had she consulted with him, saying,

You unmasked very justly that in all my complaints I mentioned my husband very little – it was because I knew very well he would not approve of my writing in that strain & therefore I wrote without consulting him. If I had opened my mind more to him, I should not have been so silly – but I did not like to let him know how gloomy I was – as I know it would only add to his pain.⁷⁶

⁷³ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #269, Frances Stewart to Harriet Beaufort, 27 May 1826.

⁷⁴ Errington, 35.

⁷⁵ Maas, 102.

⁷⁶ Sir Frances Beaufort collection, Huntington Library, FB 1603, Frances Stewart to Francis Beaufort, 10 December 1826. This quotation and others from the same letter found elsewhere in this thesis are reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Frances was cognizant of the risk involved in keeping from Tom anything she might write about their relationship, mentioning once in a letter that he generally opened and read her letters from Harriet first.⁷⁷ That she would write such a letter, especially to a male acquaintance, is startling, when viewed in light of research conducted by Maas of Upper-Canadian immigrant couples of the early nineteenth century. Maas's findings conclude that women confided only in other women, and seldom on matters relating to marriage. She continues that most marital relationships were based on companionship and affection, due to the fact that couples often lived in isolation from others. Happily, it may be that Frances and Tom did become closer, for Frances stated on the occasion of their nineteenth wedding anniversary that their love had increased with the years.⁷⁸

In another letter, despondent at Tom's frequent bouts of depression and knowing that he found her inept and ignorant in her performance of household duties, Frances writes about the inner turmoil and unhappiness this caused her:

[Tom] seems to like Mrs Armour very much – She is he says, a very sensible clever woman – middle age and rather plain in appearance with a good countenance and good natured manners, she has no maid, a very common misfortune in this country and she is obliged to clean house, cook, wash, and do everything herself, and she had seven children. . . . I envy people who can do all those things – they are so much better suited to this country than useless I am. Tom admires that sort of cleverness so much too, and he feels so much my want of it that I sometimes feel a little melancholy, for I am not half clever enough for a farmers wife; and he has been so much accustomed to very clever English women that he is rather hard to please or very exact. You know I never saw that mode of life at all so that I am very ignorant. . . . Indeed latterly I dont know why I feel great deadness over me . . . a sort of stupidity and compression of mind which I used not to have at all.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #269, Frances Stewart to Harriet Beaufort, 27 May 1826.

⁷⁸ *OFH*, 1902, 139.

⁷⁹ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #269, Frances Stewart to Harriet Beaufort, 27 May 1826. The Mrs. Armour mentioned by Frances was the wife of Reverend Samuel Armour, who became an ordained Church of England minister shortly after the couple's arrival in Upper Canada in 1826. The Armours emigrated from Scotland and were the first European settlers in Otonabee Township.

Because of her lack of experience, Frances was disadvantaged in circumstances that demanded that she work long and strenuous days at varied domestic chores. Accustomed to having been cared for by servants in Ireland, she had little direct experience at organizing and managing a household. It is apparent that she felt unable to measure up to Tom's expectations that she perform her tasks and responsibilities to the level of the highly esteemed and capable 'English' women. Her feelings of inadequacy caused her much unhappiness, and this in turn resulted in negative self-assessments. Furthermore, Tom attended to all their financial affairs, and after his death, Frances felt entirely incompetent to make decisions on her own. Stafford Kirkpatrick, a Peterborough lawyer, corroborates her claims that she had no useful experience in this regard to draw upon after his death; worriedly he mentions to a brother in the mid 1840s that Tom had requested money from Frances's account in Ireland.⁸⁰ Unfortunately, in this particular matter, there is no further detail, but Kirkpatrick's statement is suggestive of the control that Tom had over the couple's finances and the resulting fear of having to depend on others that Frances experienced later on. Her fear of dependency is illustrated in a reference to her frequent bouts of illness and the stress this placed on her family. She writes, "I am so afraid of getting sick – this is the time of year I generally get one of my bad colds & I think if I get one now, it would be sad trouble to everybody, for all seem to have plenty to do."⁸¹ Sally Chivers affirms the seriousness of becoming dependent, arguing that, "the idea that a person may become dependent threatens whatever stability

⁸⁰ Stafford F. Kirkpatrick fonds, TUA, Stafford Kirkpatrick to Alexander Kirkpatrick, 9 July 1845. Stafford Kirkpatrick (1809-1858) was the brother of George Kirkpatrick, husband of Frances's sister, Catherine.

⁸¹ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #225, Frances Stewart to Frances Stewart Brown, 10 January 1872.

and boundaries one has set up in one's life."⁸² Bettina Bradbury's research confirms the typicality of Frances's widowhood experience. She found that women of the nineteenth century who lost their husbands suffered a diminished standard of living and were faced with making decisions regarding the household for the first time in their lives.⁸³

Frances viewed herself within the context of contemporary gentlewomen, whom she regarded as dependent and lacking the wherewithal to care for their own selves:

A woman is a very helpless creature in this world & I have been so completely unaccustomed to acting for myself in any way or degree for the last 34 years of my life - & particularly after I became subject to asthma that now I really am ignorant of anything & become bewildered & constantly forget things which ought to be done – always having had those with me who could think & act for me – much better than I could for myself.⁸⁴

Countering feelings of insecurity and loneliness, Frances was acutely aware of her need to rely on others after Tom's death; she explains the importance of her relationship with God in connection to this:

When we feel ourselves alone & obliged to think & act without the friend to think & act for or with us – when we look around & see all others, happy & gay, & that each possesses some one friend who makes them their first object, & that all have some tie, then we who are widows do feel our desolation – we then feel ourselves drawn closer to The One Friend whose love never fails. . . . whose love is more lasting than any Earthly friend.⁸⁵

Frances's allegiance to one formal religion seems to have waned over time. Although strictly raised in Church of England doctrine, she became noticeably non-denominational as she aged. The trigger may have been a misunderstanding that occurred between the Stewart family and Reverend Robert Taylor of Peterborough's St. John's Anglican

⁸² Sally Chivers, *From Old Woman to Older Women: Contemporary Culture and Women's Narratives* (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2003) 99.

⁸³ Bettina Bradbury, "Marriage and Widowhood in Nineteenth-Century Montreal," in *Mapping the Margins: The Family and Social Discipline in Canada, 1700-1917*, ed. Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau (Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2004) 104.

⁸⁴ Stewart correspondence, TRL, Baldwin Room, S215 A, Frances Stewart to [Harriet Beaufort], 15 November 1850.

⁸⁵ Stewart fonds, TUA, 74-1005, Letter #3, Frances Stewart to Maria [], 11 April 1854.

Church at the time of Tom's death in 1847. Frances wrote a letter of apology to Taylor a few months after Tom died explaining that the visit to her husband's deathbed by his friend, the Reverend George Roger, a Presbyterian minister at St. Andrew's Church, was by no means meant to slight Taylor, and that "it never occurred to us that you could feel hurt at any of us for receiving a visit so kindly paid & so kindly meant - & at such a time."⁸⁶ Both the visit by Roger, and Frances's comments in her letter of appeasement to Taylor, are suggestive that the family was in the process of making a break from the Church of England. Writing in a conciliatory tone to Taylor, Frances reasoned: "[Tom] admired Mr Rogers as a Christian - & for this reason he bespoke a pew in addition lately made to the Scotch Church - but he never intended to leave our own church - where he found its devotions as he said - those of the Catholic Christian Church of England."⁸⁷ Selena Crosson pinpoints the family's increasing unease with Anglicanism to the era of the Family Compact, writing "the Stewarts had gained much in Canada from their Anglican connections but disdained the political churchmanship that characterized the era of the Family Compact, where membership in the Anglican Church was a minimum requirement for advancement."⁸⁸ Over the decades that followed her husband's death, Frances followed the doctrines of the Anglican, Presbyterian, and Baptist churches, a factor that Joyce Lewis considered unusually "broad-minded" in an "age of sectarian intolerance."⁸⁹ Frances's daughter, Bessie, remarked that her mother "made no show of

⁸⁶ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #200, Frances Stewart to Reverend Robert Taylor, 20 September 1847.

⁸⁷ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #200, Frances Stewart to Reverend Taylor, 20 September 1847.

⁸⁸ Crosson, 166-167.

⁸⁹ Lewis, "Frances Stewart," 67.

her religion – but felt all the deeper & came out full in her from consistent life [sic] – bearing up under all trials & difficulties to the last day of her life.”⁹⁰

Fundamental differences in thinking between Frances and Tom had laid the groundwork for the later insecurities that Frances was to feel in widowhood. She claims that Tom had “ruled most strictly.”⁹¹ She worried, for example, that he could not bear to think about their sons leaving home and had tried to arrange for them to have farms nearby as each reached the age of 21. That Frances resisted this plan is evident in the following passage: “I am decidedly of opinion that it is better for young men to go a little into the world & feel their way thro’ life – it shews them what life is and teaches them how to be independent.”⁹² Frances rebelled, at least through her writings, against standards that prohibited her from having a voice in the family’s affairs, and she was disheartened by the thought that her sons were unable to pursue paths more consistent with what she would have desired for them. Regardless of either parent’s aspirations, the sons followed their own paths, from farming locally to working further afield in such places as Toronto, Banff, and the USA.

The reality of pioneer women’s lives was often incongruent with the fact that they were expected to act submissively towards husbands who assumed authoritarian roles in the family. They had little voice in the family decisions although their circumstances called for their direct and constant involvement in the running of the household. Alison Prentice, et al, found that women’s tasks “whether they were managers, servants, or

⁹⁰ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #129. This quotation is Bessie Brown’s [1872] postscript on her own copy of a letter that had been sent originally by her mother, Frances Stewart, to a cousin, Mrs. Wilson, 3 June 1828.

⁹¹ *ibid.*

⁹² Stewart correspondence, TRL, Baldwin Room, S215 A, Frances Stewart to [Harriet Beaufort], 15 November 1850.

slaves, mothers, unmarried aunts, or daughters,”⁹³ reflected the occupations of the men who lived in the household. In the case of Frances and her daughters, this meant that they performed duties that supported the farming operation.

Women also established and nurtured important extended family relations and friendships and these too contributed to the economic interests of the family. The previously mentioned letter written by Frances to Francis Beaufort exemplifies an attempt by Frances to procure a position for Tom through an extended family connection. She writes, “I cannot tell you how deeply we feel all your active kindness about the Land Company - & the other appointments you & kind Maria E. [Edgeworth], have been endeavouring to procure for Mr. S. [Tom].”⁹⁴ Nancy Christie notes that, “the fear of imminent destitution... pervaded all social groups and was a much recorded and discussed subject in familial correspondence.”⁹⁵ She would consider such a communication from Frances to Francis Beaufort a “begging” letter, corroborating her claim that “the hierarchical features of gender, age, and wealth were reinforced within the extended family economy of obligation.”⁹⁶ She mentions the gendered “rhetoric of need” and the “emotive language” used in nineteenth-century letters, arguing that “there were powerful conventions surrounding the definition of respectable poverty, which were policed within families, and that these codes of deservedness were well understood by poor relatives.”⁹⁷ Frances would, at least, subconsciously, understand that a letter written

⁹³ Alison Prentice, Paula Bourne, [et al], *Canadian Women: A History*. 2nd ed. (Toronto: Harcourt Brace, 1996) 70.

⁹⁴ Beaufort collection, Huntington Library, FB 1603, Frances Stewart to Francis Beaufort, 10 December 1826.

⁹⁵ Nancy Christie, “A ‘Painful Dependence:’ Female Begging Letters and the Familial Economy of Obligation,” in *Mapping the Margins: The Family and Social Discipline in Canada, 1700-1917*, ed. Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s UP, 2004) 82.

⁹⁶ Christie, 92.

⁹⁷ Christie, 88.

from a gendered and subordinate stance would solicit a positive response from relatives who would feel a sense of familial obligation to assist her in finding a position for Tom. She would know that it would be in the wider family's interests for Tom to secure a respectable appointment befitting the family's social position in Upper Canada.

Although the Stewart family did not prosper financially, Tom became successful, to a point, in other ways, and would be considered representative of the immigrant gentry, as defined by Wagner; that is, that "the gentry became local leaders, ardent supporters of economic progress, and officers in the local militia."⁹⁸ Tom was appointed to the Legislative Council of Upper Canada; he was a proponent of the development of an inland waterway; and, he led a company of 200 volunteers in the 1837 Rebellion, although this company was not required to act. We learn from the family research of the Shearman sisters that, by 1827, Tom had given up farming himself, distributing his farmland to four or five tenant farmers,⁹⁹ and one year later, claiming, that of his 1200 acres, he had 70 under cultivation.¹⁰⁰ This figure far exceeds the rate by which land was cleared and cultivated by peasant settlers, who, on average, according to John Mannion, owned 100 acres and cleared less than two acres per year.¹⁰¹ This point is significant in that it proves that, although Tom had conceded that he himself was not a farmer, he had adapted to a new way of life by taking on tenant farmers. Wagner claims that the rate by which the gentry cultivated their land is an indicator of their adaptation.¹⁰² Against all odds and, even, on occasion, while drawing no rent from his more destitute tenant

⁹⁸ Wagner, ii.

⁹⁹ Hall & Shearman, 68.

¹⁰⁰ Hall & Shearman, 67.

¹⁰¹ Mannion, 74.

¹⁰² Wagner, 56.

farmers,¹⁰³ Tom had successfully devised and legitimized a means to support his family in line with traditional gentry sensibilities. Nevertheless, he remained attuned to the scale of thinking of most other Upper Canadian gentry in that he was ever only moderately well off.¹⁰⁴

The 1826 Beaufort letter in which Frances confides on matters relating to Tom seems to have been written during an extremely low point in her life. It is probable that, in addition to their fundamental differences in thinking, she and Tom compounded each other's feelings of unhappiness as each suffered debilitating bouts of depression. David Gerber points, too, to the period of instability that most pioneer immigrants faced upon settling, and his summary plausibly echoes Frances's personal experience during that time. He writes,

Emigration puts a singular strain on personal identity, because it is a radical challenge to continuity. It may set individuals adrift by sundering their relationships to places, things, and people. Not only does it remove, if only for a time, practical, material, and psychological sources of support, but it also disrupts the emigrant's own self-awareness, for it is through this continuous relationship to places, things, and above all, to other people, that we know ourselves.¹⁰⁵

It is conceivable that Bessy's death, along with persistent feelings of loneliness and ineptitude, and probably, physical and emotional exhaustion from bearing and nursing a succession of children (five between 1817 and 1825), all contributed to the debilitating despondency that Frances experienced. Her tone in the Beaufort letter is entirely submissive, suggesting that she looked to Harriet's brother as an authoritative yet loving father or "uncle-like" figure. She writes:

[Your letter] showed me that you still love me & feel the same uncle-like affection for me . . . when you might so reasonably & fairly have cast me off as

¹⁰³ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #197, Frances Stewart to Maria Waller, [7] December 1846.

¹⁰⁴ Wagner, 53.

¹⁰⁵ Gerber, *Authors of Their Lives*, 67.

undeserving of your care – from my very inexcusable weakness & discontent. . . . I have often since regretted most painfully having exposed myself so much to my dear and warmly attached friends - & grieved them so much by my dismal representations.¹⁰⁶

Even during this period of great unhappiness we glimpse a stoic and principled woman. Frances painfully regrets having confided on matters to Beaufort that should never have been discussed. Over the next few years, however, her letters suggest a rising of her spirits, and it becomes apparent that she has begun to feel stronger and more confident. Remarkably, in 1827, the gift of a piano from Maria Edgeworth made a precarious journey from Ireland to the log cabin in Douro and Frances was able to resume her passion for music, a factor that may have slowly contributed to her recovery from depression. She avows, “my dear Maria it will be to me most truly valuable & delightful – it will beguile many a solitary hour if I pass more years in Canada & will draw many many tears from my heart & eyes when its sweet sound & touch & even the sight of it, will bring to my very sight – (Alas! my minds eye) so many dearly dearly loved friends.”¹⁰⁷ Another letter, written the year following the arrival of the piano, reveals that Frances had undergone a deep religious conversion. Faith in a divine being, combined with the encouragement and praise of her relatives and acquaintances in Ireland, contributed increasingly to her quiet acceptance of her life, and to an inner strength and courage that permitted her to carry out exhausting physical duties while maintaining a perspective enmeshed in gentry perceptions and attitudes. In June 1828, Frances reveals to a cousin:

Thank God – of late He had given me a much clearer view of the state of my own heart, than I ever before had I always loved or thought I loved Him, - but I loved

¹⁰⁶ Beaufort collection, Huntington Library, FB 1603, Frances Stewart to Francis Beaufort, 10 December 1826.

¹⁰⁷ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #122, Frances Stewart to Maria Edgeworth, 2 August 1826.

myself too much . . . I was very unhappy & awfully sinful some time ago – I set my heart too much on my friends in this world - & pined for them - & wickedly thought I never would have enjoyment without their society – How Mercifully He dealt with me in whose hands I am – He gave me his Grace to feel that I valued them too much – I forgot Him my best friend – He made me to feel the insufficiency of worldly comfort in trials – He did try me & moved me that His words & grace – can alone support & instruct & that friends tho sweet company are but secondary comfort – that their advice sometimes leads one into doubts – but “His help is True” – I am here separated from you all - & often have been placed in very trying situations - & I found my foolish heart regretting those friends from whom I could procure advice – at last I felt the power of His free Grace & Mercy -& flew to Him to shew me my way.¹⁰⁸

The epiphany above shows that Frances had become reconciled to her life in Upper Canada. By this time, she had been an immigrant settler for more than five years. She was familiar with the many varied tasks required of her and was capably managing a household and raising her family in the wilderness. As years passed, Catharine Parr Traill, who had arrived in Upper Canada in 1832, came to regard Frances a wise and experienced mentor. She looked to her for spiritual and emotional support and sound practical advice, and says in a loving remembrance to her:

Your loving kindness in word and deed has ever been a balm to my spirit . . . Your nice letters are so precious to me that I feel happier for having read them for days afterwards. . . . Your advice and example and encouragement would be so invaluable to me. I seem to need some one to speak to and interchange friendly thoughts with from time to time.¹⁰⁹

Traill’s perspective indirectly reveals that over time Frances’s feeling of alienation had lost its edge.

The letters that Frances wrote after leaving Ireland reveal an enormous upheaval in the life of one so inadequately equipped for the hardships associated with being a pioneer. Her loneliness is reiterated in every letter, while the long awaited return mail

¹⁰⁸ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #129, Frances Stewart to Jane Stewart Wilson, 3 June 1828. The source upon which Frances’s epiphany is based is unknown.

¹⁰⁹ Stewart collection, TRL, Baldwin Room, S215 A, Catharine Parr Traill to Frances Stewart, 17 September [1844].

was a source of tremendous elation and anxiety. While gathering letters for her manuscript in 1888, Ellen affirms their importance, writing to her uncle, “how often I saw my mother read her Home letters & weep as if her heart would break.”¹¹⁰ The letters represented the only connection that Frances had with her loved ones in Ireland, and for that reason, we know that they were exceedingly important to her. In explaining the complexities of maintaining the connection that had once been easily achieved through physical closeness, Gerber writes, “intimate conversations, the ordinary, world-making discourse of individuals, would no longer suffice to provide anchors for the individual, so writing... had to suffice to accomplish the goal of achieving continuity.”¹¹¹ In 1859, reflecting on the frequent exchange of letters, Frances movingly avows, “I often think I don’t know any person in Canada amongst the hundreds who have left their homes & friends, who is so fortunate as I am in hearing so constantly from those dear ones who I left so many many years ago, who still retain me in their home circle by constant intercourse on paper.”¹¹² This is testimony to the feeling of reassurance and the sense of continuity that the letters from her loved ones gave her. Maas, too, affirms the significance of such letters, saying that, “transatlantic communication assured female immigrants of their identity and gave them a sense of continuity and cultural belonging, which eased the painful process of being uprooted.”¹¹³ To the final year of her life, and with growing effort, Frances kept contact with her loved ones through her letters. In one she wrote, “I am grown so stupid & slow both in thinking and acting that letter writing is

¹¹⁰ Kirkpatrick papers, PRONI, Ellen Dunlop to George Kirkpatrick, 29 October 1888.

¹¹¹ Gerber, *Authors of Their Lives*, 57.

¹¹² Stewart fonds, TUA, 92-1002, Letter #2, Frances Stewart to [aunty], 4 April 1849.

¹¹³ Maas, 106.

now quite a task for me.”¹¹⁴ With age, Frances was combating further physical ailments - nosebleeds, rheumatism, weakness, and deafness - in addition to her lifelong asthmatic condition.

While considering letters, both sent and received, it is important to realize that voice in text poses difficulties and challenges in interpretation. That Frances was often heartbroken and homesick is not to be refuted; however, one must keep in mind that the moments of writing are, in a sense, a detachment from reality, a time to reflect, synthesize and communicate feelings, while the writer thinks about those who will read the words. Letters and diaries and journals are self-conscious autobiographical writings and they serve to create and anchor the identity of the writer. Anthony Giddens believes that such writings assist in keeping one's narrative coherent, and more profoundly, that “a person's identity is [found]... in the capacity *to keep a particular narrative going*.”¹¹⁵ Letters create and affirm a personal narrative and facilitate the construction of the self. They provide a forum for expressing sentiments, worries, and ambitions for which there is no other outlet. Intended for those she loved and trusted, Frances was unhappy knowing that her private letters, segments of her *narrative*, would be read by several people besides the intended recipient: “I send you & Anna six letters between you, which you can exchange, & return when read, but in writing to the writers of them or any of our friends don't mention that I sent you the letters or that you read them for I know they so much dislike having them sent round - & certainly one doesn't like it ones self.”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Traill family collection, LAC, Frances Stewart to Annie [Traill], 25 September 1871.

¹¹⁵ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1991) 54.

¹¹⁶ Stewart fonds, TUA, 94-007/1/7, Letter #6, Frances Stewart to Ellen Dunlop, [1869].

It is important to understand that there are a number of ways in which one could tell the life story of Frances Stewart. The evidence allows for a range of interpretations, but counter to assertions by the more extreme poststructuralists, such as Hayden White, who urges historians to “break the one-dimensional tendencies of their work and to experiment with new forms of representation,”¹¹⁷ the historical boundaries do impose limits. There are only so many stories to be told. The evidence would support, however, a study of Frances’s relationships with her servants, looking at her close and long-standing relationship with her maid, Betty, who had immigrated with the family in 1822. This could profitably augment the current academic inquiry into the subject of servants and their relationships with their employers. One could trace the barely perceptible but droll humour that is woven through the letters year after year, and examine it within the wider context of Frances’s personality and her strategies for coping. One could draw upon her comment about the parallels between cheerfulness and religion, for example, in which she says,

I do enjoy & delight in cheerfulness – surely there is nothing wrong in indulging the flow of good spirits if one is blest with them – I think great cheerfulness & lively animation is quite consistent with sincere religion - & I think that lovely & cheerful intercourse with each other is not only right but actually necessary to preserve us from sinking into simple selfishness & apathy.¹¹⁸

One could explore Frances’s attraction to the aboriginal natives and juxtapose this with her discerning interest in the natural world about her, or examine her friendship with Catharine Parr Traill in order to further the enquiry around both women. Traill tenderly summarizes her own feelings about her friendship with Frances, saying, “This dear and

¹¹⁷ Lloyd S. Kramer, “Literature, Criticism, and Historical Imagination: The Literary Challenge of Hayden White and Dominick LaCapra,” in *The New Cultural History*, ed. Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: U of California P, 1989) 119.

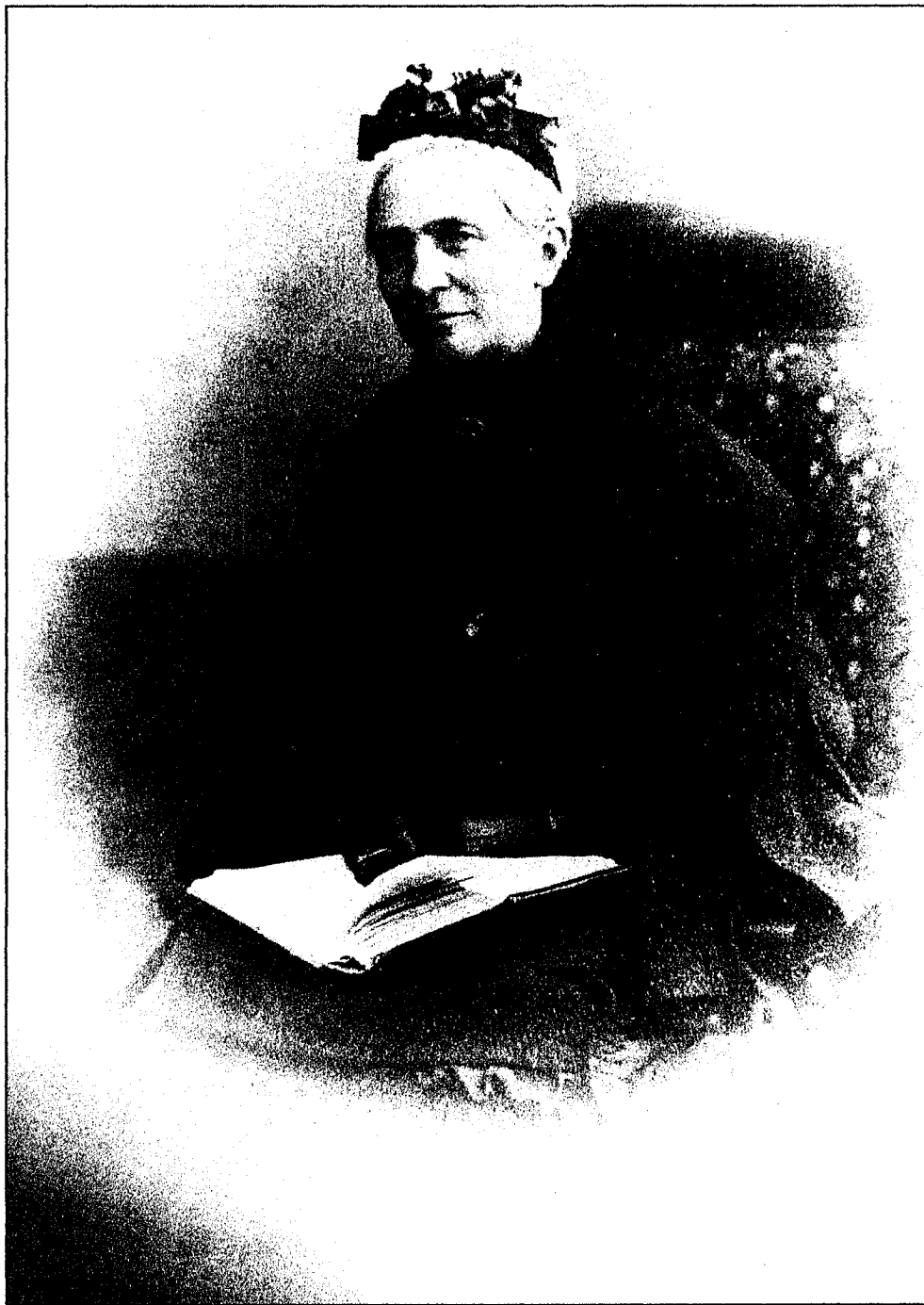
¹¹⁸ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #122, Frances Stewart to Maria Waller, 2 August 1826.

much valued friend, is associated with my own earliest experiences in the forest wilderness and with some of my happiest days beneath the pines of Douro.”¹¹⁹ Ballstadt, Hopkins, and Peterman point out that Frances “took a steady interest in Catharine’s writing, sometimes helping her with copying, and when the occasion called for it, finding subscribers for her books.”¹²⁰ One wonders whether Frances’s attentiveness to these tasks reflected an interest in publishing something herself, or whether the earlier missives by friends and family in Ireland had heightened her awareness of the possibilities. These are just a few ways in which one could explore meaning in the writings and represent a life.

This chapter has presented Frances in a manner that focuses on three defining factors of her life, her class, gender, and ethnicity. It has presented a plausible conceptualization of her life as an Anglo-Irish protestant immigrant of genteel background who tried to reproduce and maintain her traditional gentry life in the vastly different social context of Upper Canada. Struggles to reproduce and maintain the traditional social structure and values of the home country by many “Frances Stewarts” have laid the foundation for the Canada that we know today.

¹¹⁹ Traill, *I Bless You in My Heart*, 13.

¹²⁰ *ibid*, 131.



Ellen Dunlop (1819-1907)
Photo courtesy of the late Jean Shearman

Figure #2

Chapter 2

The editor revealed: the life of Eleanor Susannah Stewart Dunlop

*"Ellen walked over to see us the day before yesterday – poor dear her heart seems with us still."*¹

Frances Stewart to her aunt, Maria Noble Waller, Ireland, 5 May 1847

Eleanor Susannah Stewart Dunlop (1819-1907) was born in Ireland and was the second oldest of three daughters to accompany her parents to Upper Canada in 1822. Her life is revealed to us through comments and descriptions about her in letters between Frances, her aunt Catherine, and Catharine Parr Traill; through letters from Frances, Traill, and Arnold Haultain to Ellen; and through letters from Ellen to her uncle, the Reverend George Kirkpatrick, and her nieces and nephews. In the groupings directly by or to Ellen, the corresponding reciprocal letters are missing; only one side of the communication is available for research. These letters, along with Ellen's editorial commentary in *OFH*, and the known socio-cultural, economic, and political conditions which prevailed, are explored herein with a view to teasing out the influences in a life that led to Ellen's editing decisions in *OFH*.²

Ellen was affected by poor health from early childhood on, and was frequently attended in Peterborough by Dr. Hutchison and, later, her brother-in-law, Dr. Thomas Hay.³ Her fragile state, although never identified as a particular illness, was a lifelong concern to her family and friends. Frances once commented that Ellen "has almost

¹ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #204, Frances Stewart to Maria Waller, 5 May 1847.

² The extensive Stewart family genealogy material in the Jean Shearman fonds at Trent University Archives reveals little about Ellen, perhaps understandably, as her lineage ended with her daughter, Mary.

³ Dr. John Hutchison (1797-1847) was the first doctor in Peterborough. His partner, Dr. Thomas Hay, was married to Ellen's sister, Anna.

constantly some pain or ailment which shews there is still something wrong,”⁴ a statement that suggests chronic malaise of some sort. Frances worried about her conduct, as well. Expressing relief at seeing signs of improvement, she wrote: “I am thankful that God has blessed my endeavours & your own in improving your temper and disposition so very much within the last year – I am sure it must add to your comfort as it does to mine.”⁵ Until Ellen married and was settled with her own family, she was regarded as temperamental and unreliable, even though she appears to have had full responsibility for the vegetable gardens and poultry. She also had keen interest in plants and exchanged native seeds with Traill and with Harriet in Ireland, whom she had come to know through an exchange of letters. Despite the fact that she contributed concretely to the welfare of the family and had a hobby that was guaranteed positive endorsement by family and friends, Ellen is almost invariably discussed in terms of the worry she caused, while Anna, the oldest, who had assumed many of the household tasks at a very early age, was admired for her dependability and maturity. Frances reveals a less-than-smooth relationship with Ellen in the following undated letter to her:

Why should you always wish your life was only beginning – I think you have had in general as happy a life as anyone can have – for who is there that can say they never have had a sorrow or felt a regret – no not one! – but I think our family have uncommon reason for happiness & thankfulness for few profess so many real & true blessings - & the true sources of happiness as we do – and one of the greatest is the strong & warm union & attachment which exists amongst us... You need not think with sorrow of any trouble or pain you have given me my dearest Ellen for there is no young person in the world who does not give some trouble to those who have the care of them - & I am sure you have not given me more than the others tho’ I may have oftener had occasion to call to you or find fault with you for trifles – because your natural character was of that rapid giddy impatient nature, which required to be constantly controlled – just like our own poor horse Johnny – who is good & useful & valuable – but he has now suffered by the same

⁴ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #215a, Frances Stewart to Mary Martha Noble Sutton, 10 November 1856.

⁵ Stewart-Dunlop fonds, TUA, 94-007/1/7, Letter #3, Frances Stewart to Ellen Dunlop, 9 October 1842.

failing of thoughtless eagerness & quickness which you have sometimes suffered from – but which is very much abated lately – So my dear Ellen do not any more think you have given me too much pain, for there are few days I do not return thanks to God for having given you to me – for tho' you may have faults – which it is my duty (often a painful one) to point out & correct – yet you have also many many amiable & truly valuable qualities which are far beyond your faults – I never can remember faults – or quarrels or offences - & I wish you were the same, for it saves one much misery.⁶

Although this passage reveals a turbulent relationship, Frances and Ellen's lives were intertwined in an indubitably loving way. Frances saw admirable similarities between Ellen and Ellen's aunt, Frances's sister, Catherine Kirkpatrick in Ireland; like Catherine, Ellen had "a warm affectionate heart & [was] perfectly free from selfishness."⁷ Ellen became acquainted with Catherine and her husband, Reverend George Kirkpatrick, much later, on a trip to Ireland that she and her daughter, Mary, made in 1852. Frances sometimes lamented her manner in dealing with Ellen over their difficulties, writing, "my hasty temper causes me to say more than I intend & in stronger terms than I am at the time aware of but for which I always feel sincere sorrow when I think of it again."⁸ Notwithstanding the apparent tensions between the two that continued into Ellen's adulthood, however, they visited each other regularly after her marriage to Charles Dunlop in 1845 and several endearing letters from Frances to Ellen exist in archival holdings.

After their marriage, Ellen and Charles lived in Otonabee Township on Charles's 200-acre farm, Belvedere, a property that he had acquired in 1835 after immigrating to

⁶ Stewart-Dunlop fonds, TUA, 94-007/1/7, Letter #1, Frances Stewart to Ellen Dunlop, n.d. This letter may have been written a year or two before Tom's death.

⁷ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #215a, Frances Stewart to Mary Martha Noble Sutton, 10 November 1856.

⁸ Stewart-Dunlop fonds, TUA, 94-007/1/8 Letter #4, Frances Stewart to Ellen Dunlop, 25 February 1856.

Canada from Ireland at the age of 18.⁹ In 1852, they moved from Belvedere into their newly built home, Malone, which was named after an estate by that name in Ireland, the ancestral owners of which were connected to the Stewart family by marriage. The construction of Malone, which was supervised by Charles, and the concurrent trip to Ireland by Ellen and Mary, coincided with an unbearably painful period in the couple's lives, three of their infant children having died between 1848 and 1850. Malone is located on land that Ellen inherited from her father, a parcel of the original 1200-acre Stewart property that Tom acquired by grant from the Crown in 1822. The plans for the Dunlop home, described as a Regency/Ontario Gothic style building and closely resembling the second-built Stewart home, Auburn, were drawn by George Stewart, Ellen's brother, a provincial land surveyor.¹⁰ Built of vertically placed logs, the house had running water to a bathroom on the upper floor, the water "pumped from the Otonabee River into a gravity tank by means of an hydraulic pump."¹¹ In 1856, Frances explains to a relative in Ireland the comfort that Ellen enjoyed at Malone:

Ellen & Charles have every comfort about them – they have a sweet pretty place & a most convenient and comfortable house just as much land as affords his occupation & amusement & supplies them with many of the necessities of life & enough of money to keep them quite independent – Ellen is always complaining of her poverty - & of the difficulty of making "both ends meet" but still I never find any want of every comfort & even luxuries - & tho' their income is nominally only £50 a year yet they have other helps which make it out a very good one. Mrs Dunlop sends out handsome gifts constantly & valuable boxes of clothing every two or three years - so that they hardly ever have to lay out anything on clothing & Ellen is an excellent manager & delights in economizing –

⁹ Charles Pelham Mulvany, *History of the County of Peterborough Ontario...* (Toronto: Robinson, 1884) 535.

¹⁰ City of Peterborough. Peterborough Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee. http://www.city.peterborough.on.ca/pacac/big_list.pdf. 4. (internet site viewed 5 March 2006). Through the efforts of the Peterborough Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee, Malone was designated a heritage building under the Ontario Heritage Act in 1978.

¹¹ Jean Shearman fonds, TUA, 05-013, "Malone" (no author given).

She makes a good deal by her poultry & dairy too & having no great family they don't require to spend much.¹²

Of note in this account is the revelation that Ellen contributed to her immediate family's relatively high standard of living through managing her household in a skillful and efficient manner and working hard herself. It is interesting that Frances proudly portrays this picture of her daughter as she herself lamented having to do hard physical work. Ellen's contribution to her immediate family's welfare was an indicator of adaptation, however, and Ellen's marrying well was a sign of progress by a Stewart family member that Frances could be proud of. Legal documents reveal that Ellen held the title to Malone and the surrounding property, herself, and that she conducted property transactions, such as sales, leases, and mortgages, on her own accord, with her siblings and others.¹³ The Dunlops lived at Malone until 1878 when they purchased a home on the corner of Murray and Water streets in Peterborough.

Frances was closely involved in her daughters' lives. In 1847, it was her opinion that Ellen and Anna were both a little "hasty" in becoming pregnant, and she felt, too, that Ellen was lonely, especially in the early years after her marriage. She writes,

I am sure poor Anna is in that way & I suspect Ellen is beginning also – they are rather hasty I think – but I hope the Lord sends them blessings as mine to me – Ellen walked over to see us the day before yesterday – poor dear her heart seems with us still – tho' she has every comfort she can require & the best of husbands & she thinks no one like him – She is very thin.¹⁴

It is noteworthy that Frances only *suspected* that her daughters were pregnant. Did the silences around the subject of pregnancy extend even to one's own mother? Frances's

¹² Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #215a, Frances Stewart to Mary Martha Noble Sutton, 10 November 1856.

¹³ Hay-Dunlop collection, TUA, 04-023. Examples include documents: "Re Title to Lot No. 8 [& 9] Auburn Estate Plan," n.d, and "Indenture of Lease: Mrs. Dunlop to Fred'k. Fisher," 10 May 1893.

¹⁴ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #204, Frances Stewart to Maria Waller, 5 May 1847.

intuition that Ellen missed her family is corroborated in later years in *OFH* in Ellen's reference to the insecurity that she felt on her wedding day. She remembers, "although there was much happiness there was also the sad side – leaving the dear old home for a new one."¹⁵ And, in a letter that she wrote in 1900 to a nephew, she recalls how, as a young girl, a well-to-do relative, Sidney Bellingham, had invited her to Quebec to live with his family, "to be educated & enter the world of fashion,"¹⁶ and how she had felt the tie with home too strongly to leave. She passionately testifies, "oh but home was dear to me with all its hardships – my need was there."¹⁷ Although sharing a recollection of a much earlier time in her life, this statement reflects Ellen's sense of self and clearly portrays the importance of family to her. It speaks to her involvement with her siblings and their families in her adult years, to her frequent care of her nieces and nephews, and to her quiet endeavours to dispel family discordance. According to Frances, Ellen was "always going about wherever she can do good."¹⁸ Notwithstanding her dedication to a family that she dearly loved and the fact that we have access to her thoughts only from letters written in the latter part of her life, it appears that Ellen's bearing is one of indelible sadness, indicative possibly of systemic depression. Not once do we detect the subtle humour of her mother.

Much of what we know about Ellen is derived from the rich archival holdings of Traill correspondence. Ellen was 13 years old when the family arrived in Upper Canada, settling initially with the Stewarts until they had arranged for a home of their own. The two families established lifelong friendships. Within a few years after her arrival, Traill

¹⁵ *OFH*, 1902, 203.

¹⁶ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #233, Ellen Dunlop to Herbert Brown, 5 April 1900.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ Stewart fonds, TUA, 94-007/1/9, fragment attached to Letter #13, Frances Stewart to an unnamed cousin, n.d. This letter would have been written sometime after William Stewart's death in 1864.

wrote a sketch in her journal that included three fictitious characters very closely resembling Ellen and her two sisters.¹⁹ In a letter to Frances, Traill warmly commented on the friendships that she and Frances had established with each other's children, saying, "we each extend the same feeling towards each others children, though mine are too young to enjoy in the same degree the friendship that exists between your dear daughters and myself."²⁰ Traill and Ellen shared a common interest in plants, and, as mentioned previously, supplied seeds to one another. Although Traill was initially an aunt-figure to Ellen, the relationship seems to have become a mutual friendship through time. Traill came to regard Ellen as a dearly trusted confidante and depended on her in a number of ways. She considered her a patient and highly principled Christian role model for her children, and sought her guidance in the discipline of her young daughters, Kate, Anne, and Mary. In a letter to Frances, she writes, "I can trace much improvement of mind in Kate which she refers to the example and Christian conversation of dear Ellen."²¹ She continues, that Kate said, "I liked to talk with her she said Mamma [*sic*] for I felt that all she said was intended for my good – and I admire and value her for she seems to act from the highest of all motives."²² Traill's later strategy of sending her daughters to Ellen's home for discipline and guidance continued a previously established tradition by which the Stewarts and Traills would call upon each other as needed.

Ellen was accustomed to having young people in her home. The Traills' daughter, Mary, lived with her at Malone for almost a year after the Traill homestead, Oaklands,

¹⁹ Jean Murray Cole, ed., *The Old Doctor: A Backwoods Sketch by Catharine Parr Traill* (Peterborough: Hutchison House Museum, 1985). The subject of this sketch, published for the first time in 1985, is Dr. John Hutchison. Although undated, it is believed that Traill wrote the sketch between 1835 and 1840.

²⁰ Stewart correspondence, TRL, Baldwin Room, S215 A, Catharine Parr Traill to Frances Stewart, 14 March 1854.

²¹ Stewart correspondence, TRL, Baldwin Room, S215 A, Catharine Parr Traill to Frances Stewart, [1851].

²² *ibid.*

burned in 1857.²³ The children of two of Ellen's brothers, George and Henry, stayed for extended periods too after the deaths of their mothers. Ellen cared for Flora, Henry's daughter, from 1869 to 1872 and felt lonely when Flora returned to her father upon his remarriage. She writes, "dear child I miss her so much - after her own Mamas death she lived with me till Henry married again & one year before they left she was mine again at the interesting age of 15. I cannot expect to see them again."²⁴

By all accounts, Ellen's marriage to Charles was a lucky match. He receives a glowing account in 1884 from Charles Pelham Mulvany, author of *The History of the County of Peterborough Ontario*. Mulvany portrays him as a citizen held in the highest esteem:

He has been a farmer all his life, till 1875, when he retired from active business, and removed to Peterborough, where he lives in the enjoyment of a well-merited repose, and comforts, which are the reward of many years of honest toil. No man in the community is more respected – nor with more substantial reasons therefor (*sic*) – than Andrew Charles Dunlop.²⁵

Mulvany also writes that, "in 1837 he joined the Peterborough volunteers, and served till their disbandment, under Col. Cole, of the Regulars."²⁶ Thomas Poole lists him as having been Reeve in 1866 for the village of Ashburnham in Otonabee Township,²⁷ and *The County of Peterborough Directory for 1870-71* as Justice of the Peace a few years later.²⁸ Charles helped at the raising of Auburn in 1840, five years before he and Ellen were married. Ellen explained to her nephew that "Uncle A.C. Dunlop had come in 1835 – his

²³ Traill, *I Bless You in My Heart*, 27.

²⁴ Kirkpatrick papers, PRONI, Ellen Dunlop to George Kirkpatrick, 21 May 1879.

²⁵ Mulvany, 535.

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ Thomas W. Poole, *A Sketch of the Early Settlement and Subsequent Progress of the Town of Peterborough and of Each Township in the County of Peterborough* (Peterborough: Peterborough Printing Co., 1967) 122.

²⁸ J.C. Conner, *The County of Peterborough Directory for 1870-71* (Toronto: Hunter, Rose & Co., 1869) 11.

family known to father.” She continues, in an affectionate reference to her husband of more than half a century, “so in time all things worked together, I am the wife of my dear old man now a charge to each other.”²⁹

Letters written in 1845 by Traill, Frances, and Frances’s sister, Catherine, all reveal heartfelt approval of Ellen’s marriage to Charles. In a letter to Frances, Traill refers to what she viewed as a commendable trait in Charles, his show of restraint during a period in which Ellen was engaged to someone else:

I know it would annoy your dear Ellen who is very sensitive to be teased about an event on which the happiness of her future life depends, dear girl I am indeed well pleased at her choice having fallen upon one so worthy as Charles appears to be. I knew long long ago that had no other obstacle been interposed, Ellen would have been his choice but he did not attempt to interfere between her and F.H. I admired his delicacy and the honorable feeling that withheld him from seeking to win her regard, and am truly happy to think that he will reap in due time the reward of his forbearance and constancy. This my dear friend is between ourselves. Ellen might not like even from me any allusion to her former engagement. I feel assured that in no way have you over-rated C.D.’s character and I fervently hope your dear child may be happy, and make him so.³⁰

Frances’s sister, Catherine, thought well of the match, as well, and implied in a letter to Frances and Ellen that she felt Ellen’s character would profit from being married:

Well, we who got the credit of being scatter-pates when young, often, (indeed mostly) settle down happy domestic managing little wives & mothers – I suppose the Spirits we had before the cares of the world come on, merge into cheerful energy when we find ourselves responsible, so much of the comfort & credit of a family depend upon the wife & Mother & then we poor merry grigs astonish every one by the Charming beings we turn into, when we settle down – Is it not so my dear Ellen?³¹

²⁹ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #233, Ellen Dunlop to Herbert Brown, 5 April 1900.

³⁰ Stewart correspondence, TRL, Baldwin Room, S215 A, Catharine Parr Traill to Frances Stewart, [October 1844]. Annotations accompanying the transcription of this letter and another dated [1842] (Letter 24) supplied by Professor Michael Peterman, suggest that the F.H. to whom Ellen had been engaged may have been Frederick Haycock. Frederick was a neighbour, the son of Michael Haycock, who assisted Tom in designing his house in 1842.

³¹ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #195, Catherine Kirkpatrick to Frances Stewart and Ellen Dunlop, 1 July 1845.

Frances, too, was elated at the marriage, recounting to Ellen years later the joy she had felt on her wedding day. She says,

I hope you & dear Charles will believe me that I have often often thought of you both today & this evening - & recollected this time eleven years ago - I was in such gay & joyous heart & spirits that day - & had so much to cause happiness - for I felt satisfied that your comfort & happiness were secured to you for your life - or as long as you & Charles were permitted to be together - which I earnestly hope & trust may be for many a long year to come - - & that each year you may increase in every degree of comfort & prosperity - & enjoy every earthly blessing & most of all improved health - & long be spared to each other - to your darling child & to your poor old Mother who loves you both most sincerely & tenderly.³²

An undertone of relief seems to accompany these clear expressions of approval. Implicit is the feeling that Charles was a stabilizing factor in Ellen's life.

Oral history, however, adds a twist to Charles's image. He was a "dirty old man," was constantly "broke," and his long, filthy beard was always spotted with remnants of his dinner.³³ The Shearman sisters suggest that he may have been involved in the mishandlings of Stewart family moneys around the year 1865, as well, although possibly inadvertently. They say,

[Templeton Brown], with his brother Robert [Robert Brown, husband of Ellen's sister, Kate], Charles Dunlop and Frank Stewart [Ellen's brother], seem to have misappropriated or misused funds and property belonging, among others, to Frances Stewart, Frank's mother. Whether they were indeed guilty of malfeasance or merely of poor judgment, it was deemed advisable that all of them move away until the matter had blown over. There was no public outcry, and references to the incident were made in very guarded terms in letters of the period.³⁴

The archival sources reveal serious financial problems around this time that are probably related to the mishandlings mentioned above, although none directly implicate Charles.

One of Frances's letters, dated 1866, indicates that she was furious with Robert McNabb,

³² Stewart-Dunlop fonds, TUA, 94-007/1/8, Letter #4, Frances Stewart to Ellen Dunlop, 25 February 1856.

³³ Jean Shearman, descendent of Ellen's brother, William, said that her mother, Anna Louise Stewart Shearman (1893-1984) remembered Charles and the distaste that the Stewarts felt towards him. Anna Shearman would have been 13 years of age when Charles died in 1906.

³⁴ Shearman Hall and Shearman, 70.

the brother of the wife of her late son, William, who evidently had a hand in swindling the Auburn property from his own sister a few years after William's death. She writes, "I am out of all patience – indeed fairly disgusted with your brothers treatment of you my poor dear Lou – I see plainly he wants to force me to pay Anna for you," and a few lines later in an uncharacteristically large and forcefully scribbled text, adds, "I wish I had a good boot & strong leg & I would give that little chap a good Kicking or Licking if I could."³⁵ Although Charles and the others mentioned by the Shearmans do not factor in this tirade, Frances's statement clearly connotes problems over property and money. Charles, for his part, fares well in the archival evidence. Legal documents indicate that he held the mortgages of some of Ellen's siblings for many years and was executor to a few of their wills. Perhaps he was not liked, but was considered an important family tie with financial means and legal acumen. As might be expected because of the family's dependence on him, there are no negative remarks in the correspondence to support the less than flattering oral testimony of his character.

Another of those listed in the aforementioned financial mishandlings was Frank, Ellen's brother, who fought in the United States Civil War after bringing disrepute to the family by leaving his wife and children in 1858. Frank reconciled with his kin decades later, a factor that Traill attributes to Ellen. She says, "I rejoice that his good son is proving that the love of Christ is moving him to forgive the past errors of the poor Father – So as it shall be two souls are thus saved – and you my beloved friend have been under the guidance of the Holy spirit an agent in this unhopd for strange work of grace and

³⁵ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #220a, Frances Stewart to Louisa McNabb Stewart, 22 November 1866.

mercy.³⁶ That Ellen helped her brother to reconnect with his abandoned family is characteristic, as all her dealings with her siblings were supportive.

Robert Brown, the husband of Ellen's sister, Kate, another mentioned by the Shearman sisters and one of the two Browns who had been raised by Frances, was involved in criminal activity many years later, having committed forgery in 1879. His actions appear to have had lasting financial implications for the Stewart family, and for a short time following this incident, Kate and her children stayed at Malone while Charles arranged for them to make a permanent move to Montreal. Although Charles was not involved in the forgery incident, it is obvious that he was intimately aware of the details, and took some responsibility for Robert's family both in moving them to Montreal and in assisting them financially, at least for a time. Ellen recounts the turmoil of that period in a letter written to her uncle in Ireland:

Our darling Kate cannot lose her sweet smile ever her natural expression, someone said to me, I cannot fancy Kate in tears, yet her pillow nightly is wet with tears – [] by a weary look over her every morning her character comes out for the admiration of all; determined to help themselves, nothing is left untried, but the blight to one so young will never to be over come; I cannot speak of that deceiver [Robert] with any patience – his cuts were so deep – carried on for a longer time I fear than we can trace, able to bear the sting of conscience, only [] when out of danger of the law.... I felt [] down such a turmoil was brought my husband – the Bank notes forged – the trust money left to Charles & Robert to look after by my dear Mother. Louisa [wife of William Stewart, Ellen's brother] & her family beggared by the terrible acts of one so trusted. Charles was bewildered, I was afraid, he was made quite ill for some time – but he put all into James Denistouns (*sic*) hands to manage.³⁷

These references speak to Charles's knowledge of the incident and, also, to his familiarity with legal matters relating to finance and property. Documents reveal that he attained a comfortable level of wealth during his lifetime. He held mortgages to more than 20

³⁶ Traill family collection, LAC, Catharine Parr Traill to Ellen Dunlop, 3 June [1895].

³⁷ Kirkpatrick papers, PRONI, Ellen Dunlop to George Kirkpatrick, 21 May 1879. James Dennistoun (1841-1886) was a Peterborough lawyer.

properties and had shares in several companies, including the Peterborough Lock Manufacturing Company, the Light and Power Company, and the Auburn Woollen Company. At the time of his death in 1906, Charles's estate was valued at \$108,500, the entirety of which he willed to Ellen and their daughter, Mary.³⁸ That the Dunlops were well off suggests that Ellen was perhaps the only sibling with freedom to work on the manuscript and able to comfortably afford the publication costs of *OFH*.

From early in Ellen's marriage, Traill took a sincere interest in the Dunlop family. She attended their wedding in 1845, and soon after the birth of Mary, was calling her "Maisy," the pet name that Frances herself used. She was deeply concerned for the young couple, both of whom became gravely depressed for several months when their second-born, Frances, died, an infant, and then the third, Durham, at the age of two. Ellen's sister, Bessie Brown, attests to the acute effect of Durham's death on Ellen, reporting, "the loss of her dear engaging child was so unexpected & till the last moment she could not believe he was going."³⁹ In Bessie's eyes, however, Ellen, to character, set "a good example of patience & submission ... [bearing] her sad sad trial wonderfully" in the months after his death.⁴⁰ Within the year, yet another daughter, the second named Frances, was to die at the age of 10 days. Recalling this period to a cousin some 40 years later, Ellen says,

I have often thought of you & your dear wife since the death of your darling suffering child – the pang that rends the heart of the parents has been sorely felt by me. When one after another we were called to part with – the death of an infant is so different from one old enough to know – the pain of parting, how calmly they pass away – when relieved from pain. How full Heaven must be of these innocent little ones."⁴¹

³⁸ Hay-Dunlop fonds, TUA, 04-023, Charles Dunlop estate documents, 1906.

³⁹ Stewart fonds, TUA, 97-023 Folder 1, Letter #4, Bessie Brown to Maria Noble, 30 September 1850.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ Kirkpatrick papers, PRONI, Ellen Dunlop to Alexander Kirkpatrick, 16 April 1889.

Ellen's 1852 trip to Ireland with Mary was an effort to overcome the overwhelming sadness that she felt at that time. A heart-wrenching letter sent to Traill while there profoundly upset her friend. Unfortunately, Ellen's letter is not available in known archival holdings, but Traill's response is extant:

Your letter made me feel sad my dearest child and for some time caused me great uneasiness... The recital of all you have gone through made me shudder or weep... I wish I could hear that you were carried off to some quiet country home where you could nothing see nor be seen except by one or two quiet quakerly females who would nurse you gently and not let you excite yourself or be excited till you were quite strong again and then fly away with you home.⁴²

Through half a century, Traill remained sensitive to Ellen's losses, remembering her propensity to depression and supporting her through letters and visits.

Although very few of Ellen's letters to Traill exist, one is able to glean elements of Ellen's life through Traill's reciprocal letters to her, and thereby glimpse the spirit of trust they had in each other. In *OFH*, Ellen movingly describes the importance of her dear friend to the family:

Happy days and hours were enjoyed when this dear friend came; and that early friendship never ceased during my loved parents' lifetime. She is still my dearest aged friend living, drawn closer by the years of trial both have been called upon to pass through, ever receiving from her sincere and heartfelt Christian sympathy. My memory goes back to the scenes of my youth, the large open fireplace, and great wood fire, the family circle, when Mr. And Mrs. Traill ever added to my parent's happiness, and is still a bright spot in my life.⁴³

Traill's easy familiarity with the Dunlop family is captured in a fortuitous third-person account written by Ellen's sister, Anna:

Annette & I spent from Tuesday afternoon till Friday afternoon at the Dunlops & had a most pleasant visit there & dear old Mrs. Trail being still there made it doubly pleasant. She is more failed in the last year than ever, but still wonderfully bright. She was making scrap books for Ellen one of seaweed & doing that fine

⁴² Traill family collection, LAC, Catharine Parr Traill to Ellen Dunlop, 19 June 1853.

⁴³ *OFH*, 1889, 89.

work so neatly the other was pictures from the Illustrated News. Her sewing was making crazy work & doing the fancy stitches so nicely. When too dark to see she goes to the piano till tea is ready then some one comes in & there is whist till bed time which she & C [Charles] enjoy greatly.⁴⁴

It is not clear in the latter part of this passage whether the reference is about Traill or Ellen; regardless, the earlier statements certainly refer to Traill and reflect a comfortable relationship between the families. Occasionally, Traill sought Charles's help in arranging transportation for her to Peterborough from her home in Lakefield, or to Toronto to conduct business relating to her books. An aged Traill presented him with a tiny patchwork in 1894, expressing her deep regard in an accompanying note:

Dear Charles Dunlop, I send you small token of my sincere regard as a New Years gift; it is only a bit of patch-work wrought by a very aged hand.... Accept it as the work of your own and dear Ellens oldest friend.... I hope my dear Friend, that I shall hear on Kates return that you are free from suffering and that it may be our Lords will that we shall meet again... Ever faithfully Your attached aged friend, C P Traill.⁴⁵

In her letters to Ellen, Traill frequently discusses her books and trusts that she can count on her for straightforward criticism. In one, she says, "I should like to have the opinion of some sincere friend as to the usefulness of the book, the papers speak well of it but then I do not know how the critics are influenced and the unbiased judgment of one like yourself on whose truth and candor I can rely is worth more than that of reviewers."⁴⁶ Ellen saw first-hand, time and again, the processes by which Traill transformed her manuscript material into publications, and would recognize the advantages of having Traill involved in the production of *OFH*. Traill's memoir about Frances would lend credibility to the book in the marketplace, as well.

⁴⁴ Stewart fonds, TUA, 94-006, Vol. 5, p. 1028, Anna Stewart Hay to Kate Stewart Brown, 4 December 1887. Typed transcript only available.

⁴⁵ Traill family collection, LAC, Catharine Parr Traill to Charles Dunlop, 1 January 1894.

⁴⁶ Traill family collection, LAC, Catharine Parr Traill to Ellen Dunlop, 19 February 1855.

The Traills and Dunlops maintained a long friendship spanning more than half a century. In 1895 at the age of 93, Traill attended Ellen and Charles's fiftieth wedding anniversary, along with other prominent social figures,⁴⁷ and a year later, with Ellen at her side, accepted her nomination as honorary president of the newly formed Peterborough Historical Society.⁴⁸ The Peterborough *Daily Evening Review* reports the event, noting Traill's appointment and Ellen's election as the first of three vice-presidents. On the list of new members is Ellen's daughter, Mary, and Thomas Alexander Hay, Anna's son, who was chosen as secretary.⁴⁹ It is understandable that the Stewart family figured prominently in the early formation of Peterborough's historical society. They understood that they represented an important family in Peterborough and no doubt enjoyed a level of prominence. Ellen had laid the groundwork for recognition of the family's significance in 1889 by publishing *OFH*. In 1902 Ellen and several of her siblings signed over their father's "Waterloo relics" to Peterborough's Victoria Museum, which was established by the Society in 1897 under the curatorship of Hay.⁵⁰

Perhaps Mary's participation in the historical society is the most significant aspect known about her. Tiny references to her appear in the family letters, but nothing substantial exists upon which to build a portrait, or to hypothesize about the mother/daughter relationship. Frances doted on her, certainly, and we catch little snippets of her granddaughter in her correspondence: "dear little Mary is a charming girl – I never saw such a warm hearted affectionate creature as she is - & she is improving greatly in

⁴⁷ "Golden Wedding Celebration," *Daily Evening Review*, Peterborough, [Ontario], 26 February 1895.

⁴⁸ Traill family collection, LAC, Catharine Parr Traill to Annie Atwood, 14 December 1896.

⁴⁹ "To Preserve Records of History: The Peterborough Town and County Historical Association Formed," *Daily Evening Review*, Peterborough, [Ontario], 8 December 1896.

⁵⁰ Victoria Museum fonds/ The Town and County of Peterborough Historical Society fonds, PCMA, 71-026, donation agreement, 1902.

looks as well as in every other way;”⁵¹ and, “she is a very pleasant companion & shews so much good sense & soundness of mind in her ideas & views on many subjects that it is a relief, where so little goes on but dress & chitchat.”⁵² Only minimal factual information about her is revealed: she was a friend of Traill’s daughters; she helped out at church fundraising events; she was compromised health-wise by a liver ailment; and she presented a paper on the history of Peterborough to the Peterborough Town and County Historical Association in 1898.⁵³ Rather curiously, in her presentation, she avoided mentioning the names of two of the earliest known immigrants to the area, her grandparents, Frances and Tom Stewart. By itself, as some other historically significant names are omitted as well, this may not be important; however, Mary talks around her grandparents several times by identifying actions they are said to have taken, at least in her mother’s *OFH*, i.e. the naming of Peterborough by Frances, and the sounding of the bugle by Tom to announce the arrival of Sir Peregrine Maitland. The timing of the presentation, some years after the first edition of *OFH* was published in 1889, is noteworthy. The fact that she omitted the names of her grandparents suggests that she knew that the stories behind the said actions were well recognized by those present at the meeting.

Mary was bequeathed a large inheritance from her father, and upon his death, she and Ellen forgave several family mortgages that they jointly held “without requiring the payment of the principal or interest due thereon.”⁵⁴ She inherited a further settlement of

⁵¹ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #215a, Frances Stewart to Mary Martha Noble Sutton, 10 November 1856.

⁵² Stewart-Dunlop fonds, TUA, 94-007/1/8, Letter #1, Frances Stewart to Ellen Dunlop, 3 September 1869.

⁵³ “Early History of Peterborough: Interesting Historical Paper by Miss Dunlop,” *Daily Evening Review*, Peterborough, [Ontario], 18 April 1898.

⁵⁴ Hay-Dunlop fonds, TUA, 04-023, mortgage discharge document, 19 April 1906.

\$10,000 in her mother's will in 1907. It is unfortunate that the available archival material reveals very little about her, and affords minimal insight into her relationship with her mother. One could speculate, however, that by 1889 when the first edition of *OFH* was published, Ellen had considered the probability that Mary was unlikely to have children, being unmarried and 45 years of age, and that the family line would be discontinued. The implications of the fact that three of Ellen's four children did not survive infancy, and that the surviving daughter did not marry may have fueled in Ellen a desire to memorialize the existence of her own branch of an important pioneering family by publishing a book that directly included elements of her own life. This speculation is supported by the fact that Ellen repeatedly interjects her own remarks into the text, effectively highlighting her personal involvement with the subject matter.

A small but significant cache of letters written by Ellen to her nieces and nephews in the last years of her life shows a remarkable resemblance to the letters written by an aged Frances to her beloved grandchildren. She signs off in similar fashion, i.e. "my wee bit paper ends with fond love to my wee name sake from your old auntie E.S. Dunlop,"⁵⁵ and, as with Frances, entreats that they study, discusses nature and refers often to her feelings of loneliness. She writes, "the poor Robins have been about – no worms have been able to come up from the garden to give them food. The cold is so hard for them, & the sparrows are a sad little [*sic*] – get no food but the frozen ground. We feed them every day."⁵⁶ And, in another letter, "I feel the loneliness over me today knowing it is the last whole unbroken one I will have your precious g-ma [grandma] with me, but I am going to get myself to do something more useful which helps the mind & keeps the heart

⁵⁵ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #252g, Ellen Dunlop to Elleanor [], 17 July 1906.

⁵⁶ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #252e, Ellen Dunlop to Elleanor [], 31 March 1906.

warm.”⁵⁷ Compare these passages to Frances’s tender account of the bird that sat on her head as she crossed the Atlantic, and to her stoic determination to find comfort despite profound feelings of loneliness. That Ellen admired her mother’s traits of steadfast determination and innate ability to keep going is indisputable, as she states in the following passage:

How often I saw my mother read her Home letters & weep as if her heart would break – yet her letters were written in such a brilliant tone - & hope contentment & gratitude to God for her blessings which many would call crosses.⁵⁸

Ellen felt a responsibility to preserve her mother’s memory, a factor that reflects a principled and serious nature and emulates a tradition of popular Canadian writing during this period, whereby writers, according to George Parker, “shared the same views about nation-building, progress, individual responsibility, and decency... [and] international audiences gobbled up these tales about a vibrant and expanding Canada.”⁵⁹ Commenting on general Victorian attitudes and sensibilities, Philip Davis explains that, “facts, statistics, information, and explanation were all part of the Victorian effort to achieve explicit understanding, in bringing to the forefront of consciousness their own underlying background of social and philosophical changes.”⁶⁰ These observations have implications for our understanding of Ellen’s mindset as she prepared the manuscript for publication.

Through her association with Traill, Ellen had gained a perspective of the colonial context within which her mother’s life could be viewed. Undoubtedly, there was also prestige attached to this project, Ellen being the daughter of one of Peterborough’s earliest settler families, and indeed, one of the first settlers, herself. Ellen took

⁵⁷ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #252d, Ellen Dunlop to Elleanor [], 1 March 1906.

⁵⁸ Kirkpatrick papers, PRONI, Ellen Dunlop to George Kirkpatrick, 29 October 1888.

⁵⁹ George Parker, “Distributors, Agents, and Publishers: Creating a Separate Market for Books in Canada 1900-1920,” in *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* (Fall 2005: 43.2) 24.

⁶⁰ Davis, *The Victorians*, 405.

responsibility for furthering the pioneer story of eastern Upper Canada, understanding that Traill's unprecedented fame had been gained through her literary expression of a pioneer experience that was similar in substantive ways to that of Frances, and knowing that Traill had learned much from Frances about survival in the new colony, as she herself attests. Unlike Traill's works, however, which were written during the period of actual pioneering, *OFH* would have little impact on women of Frances's own generation, given its date of publication.

Ellen worried that she was not suitable for the task at hand, saying, "as her child I am hardly the one to do it justice."⁶¹ Another comment regarding the burden she felt, "there is a great deal for my judgment - & time for it, all alone,"⁶² attests to Ellen's feeling that she was alone in her onerous endeavour, although there is ample evidence that she sought and received advice from family members and friends. The fact that she was not formally educated is to blame for some of her insecurity. She says, "reading these old letters bring to our memory [Frances's] heartfelt regret about our education – this was a source of regret – it could not be otherwise, - my early delicate years I had only nursing, my share of those six brothers – feeding, sewing, knitting, & spinning for them often so weary – I craved for rest."⁶³ Stafford Kirkpatrick, however, attests to Frances's remarkable accomplishment in raising Ellen and Anna so well in such adverse circumstances, writing, "indeed considering the great disadvantages under which they have been educated, the highest credit is due to Mrs. Stewart for the manner in which she has brought them up."⁶⁴ Ellen's statement portrays a feeling of inadequacy in taking on

⁶¹ Kirkpatrick papers, PRONI, Ellen Dunlop to George Kirkpatrick, 26 June 1888.

⁶² Kirkpatrick papers, PRONI, Ellen Dunlop to George Kirkpatrick, 29 October 1888.

⁶³ Kirkpatrick papers, PRONI, Ellen Dunlop to George Kirkpatrick, 26 June 1888.

⁶⁴ Kirkpatrick fonds, TUA, Stafford Kirkpatrick to Alexander Kirkpatrick, 14 August 1835. Photocopy.

the job of editing and publishing her mother's letters, and could, perhaps, be considered alongside Frances's expressions of hopelessness at failing to perform her onerous household tasks acceptably, at least, in the eyes of Tom. Mother and daughter both suffered periods of depression and struggled with self-assessments of worth.

It has been impossible to locate *the* set of documents that Ellen used to compile *OFH*. It is evident in some instances that she had material at hand that no longer is available, as some of the subject matter in *OFH* is not found in extant archival material. As early as 1881, she had begun to gather material, having acquired several letters that had been sent to her mother after she immigrated. She writes of these dearly cherished relics, "could you see the letters written to her, from 1822 till 1872 so steadily received, & so hoarded up till the last – they are now in my care. I look at them with the greatest admiration."⁶⁵ For several years, Ellen and her siblings also searched for letters that their mother sent to family and friends, understanding their historical significance, and hoping to realize a desire to preserve the record of their mother's life for the sake of posterity. With regard to at least some of the letters, those written by Frances to her sister, Catherine, and loaned to Ellen by her uncle in 1888, we know that Ellen worked from originals, and that she considered the existence of those letters a tremendous help in filling gaps in the manuscript.⁶⁶

Ellen's correspondence with her uncle and his son, her cousin, Alexander, both of whom she had come to know in 1852 on her visit to Ireland, convey crucial details about her motives in publishing Frances's letters. Upon receiving confirmation in 1888 that her uncle had some letters in his possession, she writes,

⁶⁵ Kirkpatrick papers, PRONI, Ellen Dunlop to George Kirkpatrick, 2 November 1881.

⁶⁶ Kirkpatrick papers, PRONI, Ellen Dunlop to George Kirkpatrick, 29 October 1888.

I am so glad to hear you have some of my mothers valued letters so wonderful now to read & cull through as I have been doing, many a tear comes while I go over this deeply interesting pleasure. Could you spare all to me, how truly obliged I would feel to add the aged relics to those I have crumbling away which caused me to feel the need to copy from them what will otherwise never be known to our next generation of who they sprang from, & what my loved parents went through.⁶⁷

This passage sheds light on an objective in pursuing the letters and reveals the heavy sense of responsibility she felt to commit the memory of her mother's life to a publication for family descendents. She further discusses her purpose, and in alleged contrast to the wishes of Arnold Haultain, writes,

I am doing all this for my mother's children, grandchildren, & great g children – it will be of great interest.... Arnold Haultain read the first part I have ready & wishes much I should give it to the public – this I have not thought about – there is nothing personal in any parts only our ownelves - & even that I have only named each by the initial – A – B & E etc. etc. – it is all on my own shoulders – I feel the want of advice.⁶⁸

Luckily, this passage addresses her curious decision to use only first initials in many of her references to people. Ellen was cautious about protecting the privacy of the family, as becomes apparent in my later discussions around the notable silences and omissions; further to this, even though claiming that this first edition of *OFH* was for a private audience, she strived to make it marketable for Victorian public audiences by limiting personal references. In this vein, she writes,

I cull from each letter the advance of the country – description of work done by whom, country opening her mind on difficult subjects – the increase of family duties - & above all her own inward expression of Gods dealing with her... expressions of love to those she wrote to, & the outpouring of her soul in her beautiful religious feelings – these have to be preserved, yet slightly left out.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Kirkpatrick papers, PRONI, Ellen Dunlop to George Kirkpatrick, 26 June 1888.

⁶⁸ Kirkpatrick papers, PRONI, Ellen Dunlop to George Kirkpatrick, 29 October 1888.

⁶⁹ Kirkpatrick papers, PRONI, Ellen Dunlop to George Kirkpatrick, 26 June 1888.

The above passage is a succinctly expressed explanation of the methods that Ellen planned to employ as editor. Religion would figure less prominently than the originals allowed, and the trials and tribulations of Frances's pioneer experience would predominate. Elaborating, Ellen adds, "I am leaving out all the endearing expressions, merely the thread of interest running through about the advance of the settlement & the family incidents, so well & graphically told, so true to life."⁷⁰ This thinking corroborates George Parker's argument that late Victorian society held a heroic view of the Canadian pioneer experience, and considered it unique.

Traill's role in the execution of *OFH* was considerable, although circuitous. As early as 1882, she wrote to Ellen seeking Ellen's and her siblings' approval of her plan to write a biography of Frances for a publisher in Toronto:

I wish to know if you and your family would object to my making use of the memoir I wrote with your dear brother C's references – of your beloved Mother, and also if you would make a few extracts from her early letters.... Some one of the family could have undertaken it better than myself if they were so willing; yourself or one – or one of your brothers – So if on consideration you should so *decide*, let me know.⁷¹

Traill mentions her interest in writing about the family again in 1884, this time using unspecified material that had been compiled by Ellen's brother, Henry. Although detail is sketchy, it appears that she planned to use Henry's manuscript in a book of articles by various authors called "Prairie Homes" and to reimburse him if the work was published, although her expectations for remuneration were minimal.⁷² A year later, in 1885, another related reference appears. Without elaborating, she writes, "I have finished the extracts

⁷⁰ Kirkpatrick papers, PRONI, Ellen Dunlop to George Kirkpatrick, 29 October 1888.

⁷¹ Traill, *I Bless You*, 321.

⁷² Traill family collection, LAC, Catharine Parr Traill to Ellen Dunlop, 3 February 1884.

from your dear mothers letters, and will return the original papers.⁷³ This passage indicates that Traill copied extracts from Frances's letters, and another letter, written at about the same time, affirms her interest in seeing the letters published. She says, "I have read the memorial papers; your dear mothers letters with great interest – they would make a charming volume with the additional matter that you possess."⁷⁴ Although Ellen's letters to Traill have not survived, it is apparent from Traill's communications that there was an ongoing dialogue about the possible publication of the letters. In late 1886, Traill wrote to Ellen again on the subject, saying, "I have often thought how interesting to the old folks in Peterboro and Douro would be portions of your own dear Mother's MS. writings appear in the *Review* – I have you know made most interesting selections from the original document. Would you like to have my MS to make use of?"⁷⁵ The following comment reiterates Traill's desire for Ellen to use her manuscript material, and conceivably, could be viewed as a carefully worded proposal that she become a ghostwriter or at the very least, an editor for her friend. She writes,

I send you the MS. collated from your old record and some passages in old letters, that you let me make extracts from – Now dear friend just use it as seems best to your own judgment. I thought it better just to let you have it without taking any passage of interest from it myself. I think you may find it useful, and it is fairly written out which will save your eyes as copying from MS. is often tiresome unless pretty plainly written.⁷⁶

By her own assertions, it appears that Traill had already *edited* the letters loaned to her by Ellen, choosing excerpts that she deemed publishable.

As Ellen readied the manuscript for publication, she procured the help of a young family friend, the author and editor, Arnold Haultain (1857-1941). Born in India of

⁷³ Traill family collection, LAC, Catharine Parr Traill to Ellen Dunlop, 28 April 1885.

⁷⁴ Traill family collection, LAC, Catharine Parr Traill to Ellen Dunlop, fragment, [autumn, 1883].

⁷⁵ Traill family collection, NAC, Catharine Parr Traill to Ellen Dunlop, 20 November 1886.

⁷⁶ Traill family collection, LAC, Catharine Parr Traill to Ellen Dunlop, [1887].

British heritage, Haultain immigrated to Peterborough at the age of three, his father a retired major general. Although little reference to the Haultains exists in the Stewart family papers, documents reveal that Ellen's brother, Charles, sold a lot from the Auburn property in 1861 to Haultain's uncle, Frederick Haultain, a retired lieutenant colonel who had served in Canada with the Royal Artillery.⁷⁷ As well, the minutes of the inaugural meeting of the Peterborough Relief Society in 1866 show that a Mrs. Haultain (probably Arnold's mother) and Mrs. F. [Frederick] Haultain [her sister-in-law], Ellen, and Mrs. Charles Stewart [Ellen's sister-in-law], were all in attendance.⁷⁸ It is probable that Ellen and Arnold's mother came to be friends through their common relief work. In accordance with mid to late nineteenth-century Victorian sensibilities, relief organizations comprised of middle-class, high-minded, and respectable Christian women, a group to which Ellen and the Haultain women would aspire, were formed for the purpose of improving the lives of less fortunate women and their children. Ellen writes of her own relief efforts in coming to the aid of an ill-fated Irish immigrant family:

They were so unfitted for the approaching winter I undertook to get things gathered for them, many days going among our congregation getting supplies, as the man was ill & could not work the poor woman near her confinement & two other children to be cared for – however, her baby was born after a sad confinement – she died on the 5th day leaving her poor husband with these helpless children... I liked what I saw of the very handsome young Irish woman who was so grateful for the kindness shewn her those 2 months – this case from first to last gave me a great deal to do & think about. I was joined by some truly kind ladies. I go every day I can to see the wee motherless baby – my heart yearns for its lonely situation... I mention this to shew I have not been idle nor sitting in the house.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Hall, Gillespie law firm fonds, TUA, 94-001, Indenture of Bargain and Sale: Charles E. Stewart to Fred. W. Haultain, 1861.

⁷⁸ Trent Valley Archives, "Peterborough Relief Society." *Heritage Gazette of the Trent Valley*. 5.4 (February 2001) 8. Genealogical material relating to the Haultain family is located in the F.W. Haultain fonds, 75-1013, TUA.

⁷⁹ Kirkpatrick papers, PRONI, Ellen Dunlop to George Kirkpatrick, 7 February 1881.

Ellen was particularly touched by the plight of the children. Her own sad and difficult experience as a young mother is perhaps related to her efforts in this case and to her later bequest of \$100 to the Children's Aid Society, the only formal organization listed in her estate disbursements.⁸⁰ In addition to her local relief work, Ellen also participated in the Presbyterian Toronto-based Woman's Foreign Missionary Society (WFMS), which set out primarily, at least in the early stages, to improve the conditions for women in India through international evangelical missionary endeavours. According to Ruth Compton Bouwer, the zenana-focused efforts provided their female participants "with an opportunity for personal and spiritual growth and a chance to socialize on behalf of a good cause."⁸¹ Jennifer Henderson is perhaps more accurate in describing such social efforts, saying, the "arena of public domesticity offered middle-class women opportunities to demonstrate their moral or racial 'superiority' through the improvement of others of class and race."⁸² It is plausible to imagine that the Haultain women, who had emigrated from India and who were wives of highly ranked military officers, had influence on local relief efforts in choosing that country as an area of focus. Ellen attended WFMS meetings in Peterborough, sometimes together with Traill,⁸³ and was the local representative in Toronto on at least one occasion.⁸⁴

Arnold Haultain, the younger connection, had a wide range of interests and wrote on several subjects over his lifetime: the Riel Rebellion, the Sudan War, religious

⁸⁰ Hay-Dunlop fonds, TUA, 04-023, "Release of Legacy" document, 29 December 1908.

⁸¹ Bouwer, Ruth Compton, *New Women for God: Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Missions, 1876-1914*. The Social History of Canada; 44. (Toronto: U of T Press, 1990) 189. The zenana mission was formed in 1852 in Britain. It was an evangelical movement aimed at bettering the lives of Bengalis and Indian women in their homeland through education, with the ultimate goal being the conversion of these women to Christianity.

⁸² Jennifer Henderson, *Settler Feminism and Race Making in Canada* (Toronto: U of T Press, 2003) 39.

⁸³ Traill family collection, LAC, Catharine Parr Traill to Ellen Dunlop, 9 January 1885.

⁸⁴ Kirkpatrick papers, PRONI, Ellen Dunlop to George Kirkpatrick, 19 April 1883.

notables, women and passion and love, and golf.⁸⁵ He was also private secretary to British-born political journalist and historian, Goldwin Smith, founding publisher of Toronto's prestigious weekly literary periodical, *The Week*, and he edited and published Smith's letters posthumously in 1913. A cache of Haultain's correspondence located at the Glenbow Archives portrays an affluent life amongst the upper crust of Toronto, and his letters to Ellen show that he found the publisher for *OFH*, The Presbyterian Printing and Publishing Company, a private company in Toronto. They also reveal the level of his involvement in the production of *OFH*, in which he claims it was his pleasure to assist, saying, "I delight in the little trouble for an old & kind friend of my mother & myself."⁸⁶ Such a statement is evidence of a long social connection between the families.

Sara Mills insightfully discusses some of the societal parameters of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century and examines the gendered literary complexities contemporaneous to that period. Her work illustrates that women travel writers, for instance, took on a less authoritarian voice than men and emphasized their own personal relationships with the subjects of their text. She explains,

These two factors result from women writers' problematic status, caught between the conflicting demands of the discourse of femininity and that of imperialism. The discourses of colonialism demand action and intrepid, fearless behaviour from the narrator, and yet the discourses of femininity demand passivity from the narrator and a concern with relationships.⁸⁷

The publication process of *OFH* reveals aspects of both types of discourse discussed by Mills, the discourse of femininity and the discourse of imperialism. While presenting a

⁸⁵ Arnold Haultain's major work, *The Mystery of Golf*, was published in 1908. The style is quaint and provides a psychological analysis of the game of golf. Today, a century later, new editions and printings of this work are still being published, the more recent including an afterword by John Updike. In 2006, a first edition was listed for sale on the Web for U.S. \$1800. To the present day, this work is invariably quoted in golfing print material.

⁸⁶ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #241, Arnold Haultain to Ellen Dunlop, 23 October 1889.

⁸⁷ Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1993, ©1991) 21-22.

humble feminine demeanour, both in her dealings with her uncle whose letters she wished to procure, and in her dealings with Haultain in working out the publication details, Ellen was, at the same time, focused in her determination to publish an epistolary record of her mother's colonial life.

Janice Fiamengo's research captures the essence of the late nineteenth-century publishing conventions in Canada that wielded influence over women's creative expression in her study of the literary writings of Sara Jeannette Duncan. Duncan provides a good example by which to discuss the literary conventions of the time as she wrote articles during the 1880s for Toronto's literary periodical, *The Week*. Duncan was sometimes at odds with Goldwin Smith, especially with respect to the paper's conservative stance towards women and its overt opposition to the emerging women's suffrage movement; women were allowed to contribute to the betterment of society culturally through their writings but suffrage, with its political agenda, was viewed with suspicion. According to Fiamengo, "Smith's editorial pages consistently opposed progressive movements of the day... [and] ... *The Week* weighed in against female suffrage."⁸⁸ Interestingly and coincidental to the publishing of *OFH*, Haultain came to befriend Smith about this time, eventually working for him as his private secretary. In his dealings with Ellen and true to his refined upbringing, Haultain always remembered that she was an older friend of his mother's, a factor that ensured his show of respect for her. His deportment, however, while kind and respectful, is subtly superior and he exerted a delicate reign over major issues with regard to Ellen's editing and publishing decisions. Amazingly, he himself made the final decision on the publication title and decided to

⁸⁸ Janice Fiamengo, "Baptized with Tears and Sighs:" Sara Jeannette Duncan and the Rhetoric of Feminism," in *ReCalling Early Canada: Reading the Political in Literary and Cultural Production*, ed. Jennifer Blair, [et al] (Edmonton: U of Alberta Press, 2005) 267.

leave out Ellen's two subtitles for parts one and two. He says, "the printer tells me he wishes to hurry on, & as this is an excellent sign, and as also I wish to give him no excuse for delay, I shall risk making all corrections myself. I have chosen "Our Forest Home" as the (short) ['*short* ' *crossed out*] title, the rest can be added afterwards, & I am having no sub title for parts I & II."⁸⁹ Haultain explains his choice of title in a letter to Ellen written earlier that same day: "it lends greater interest to the book I think; & prepares the reader for the narration of domestic details."⁹⁰ These decisions were highly presumptuous considering that Ellen was given no time to respond and that the book went to print with this title without her approval. While Haultain's authority is couched in subtle and thoughtful language in his communications with Ellen, his values reflect the male-dominated publishing industry and have the effect of marginalizing his female friend. According to Cinthia Gannett, men "controlled the actual practice of discourse, not only by explicit, institutional sanctions but also by subtle and implicit stereotyping and socialization."⁹¹ Joan Sangster explains the power tension in Foucauldian terms, saying, "structures of material and gender power are realities that shape women's experiences and help or hinder them from altering the discourses available to them."⁹² It is probable that Haultain was on par with his employer in his ideas about women's place, as he was later to become Smith's literary executor, a factor that would suggest that the two held similar perspectives.

Catharine Parr Traill viewed Ellen's connection to the publishing world through Haultain as extremely fortuitous. She writes, "you have been most fortunate in having so

⁸⁹ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #244, Arnold Haultain to Ellen Dunlop, 25 August 1889.

⁹⁰ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #243, Arnold Haultain to Ellen Dunlop, 25 August 1889.

⁹¹ Cinthia Gannett, *Gender and the Journal: Diaries and Academic Discourse*. SUNY Series, Literacy, Culture and Learning (Albany: State U of New York P, 1992) 61.

⁹² Sangster, 10.

valuable and able an editor as Mr A Haultain. Very Glad would I be of such a Superintendent for my own MSS – Invaluable as a critic his judgment and knowledge would be – I only wish that I could avail myself of such assistance even to a share of half the proceeds of the work.”⁹³ Traill’s mention of proceeds is suggestive of very different financial situations between the two women. Ellen was not concerned to the same extent with costs or remuneration; she did not need to help support her family with the proceeds of her writing, as did Traill. Traill’s positive judgment of Haultain affirms the important role that he played in bringing the work to publication, regardless of the authoritarian position he assumed and the textual constraints he may have succeeded in placing on the manuscript. It seems clear that Haultain *edited* the manuscript, as the context of the passage establishes that Traill was referring to his editing of a work at hand, rather than works in general. While “editor” connotes a variety of levels of involvement, at no other time do we have such a clear reference to Haultain having taken on an editing role in the production of *OFH*. Traill was delighted that he was connected with the work, saying, “his opinion of the work alone is worth a great deal to you in insuring its success.”⁹⁴ For his part, the fact that Haultain agreed to have his name published in the preface of the text indicates that he felt it a worthy literary contribution, and he says, in reply to Ellen’s insistence that she repay him:

You speak of it being a business transaction. I assure you, dear Mrs. Dunlop, that it is a “labour of love” in two senses of the phrase: - first I delight in the little trouble for an old & kind friend of my mother & myself, & second I really like the work. I will tell you how you can repay me if you insist on it: - Add a sentence to your preface saying that “My friend Mr Arnold Haultain overworked these pages in their passage through the press”, & I shall be amply satisfied.⁹⁵

⁹³ Traill family collection, LAC, Catharine Parr Traill to Ellen Dunlop, 6 December 1889.

⁹⁴ Traill family collection, LAC, Catharine Parr Traill to Ellen Dunlop, 29 October [1889].

⁹⁵ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #241, Arnold Haultain to Ellen Dunlop, 23 October 1889.

Ellen gratefully acknowledges Haultain's request for recognition in her preface of the first edition, saying, "also [thanks] to my friend, Mr. Arnold Haultain, who has generously given his time to overlooking all matters connected with the publication of the work." Her rewording of this section, however, in contrast to Haultain's specific suggestion, signifies a quality of independence and reestablishes her active partnership with him. This small example indicates that Ellen held a delicate position of power over Haultain and her text. She was a more active participant in the finalizing decisions than the evidence allows, and the example shows that she negotiated, and gently resisted, rather than meekly accepted, the directives of Haultain. According to Elaine Showalter, "the training of Victorian girls in repression, concealment, and self-censorship was deeply inhibiting, especially for those who wanted to write."⁹⁶ Therefore, the act of writing itself for women of this period was precarious, as they needed to carefully balance self-expression with the pervasive ideologies that defined womanhood. However, at about the time of the publication of the first edition in 1889, the population in general was becoming more liberal in thinking and there was more of an inclination to individualism, a fact that may have figured into Ellen's mild resistance to orthodoxy. Additionally, her work with the WFMS had contributed to her sense of worth and, perhaps, a feeling of superiority, as Jennifer Henderson poignantly asserts.

For unknown reasons, after copying extracts of the letters in 1885, Traill relinquished what must have been her own plan to publish the life of her early Upper Canadian friend, possibly as short stories in the *Peterborough Review*.⁹⁷ Evidence reveals that she was not privy to the final draft of Ellen's manuscript, as the following passage

⁹⁶ Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977) 25.

⁹⁷ Traill family collection, NAC, Catharine Parr Traill to Ellen Dunlop, 20 November 1886.

hurriedly written upon receiving a published copy from Ellen will prove: “you ask me to give my opinion about it – I am not able to sit down pen in hand to enter into subjects of literary criticism. There may be errors in the composition, but I have read too eagerly to notice them if there be – by the by, we may find out the ‘Little Foxes’ – and hunt them out.”⁹⁸ This passage indicates that Traill had found errors in the text and establishes that she was not involved in final preparations of the manuscript.

Traill was certain that a publication of Frances’s letters would be of interest not only to family members and friends, but also to the public. She predicts:

I am sure it can not fail of proving a book full of the greatest interest not to this part of the country who knew so well the objects treated on and the localities so dear to us but I take a larger view of the literary merits of the book as to the general readers of it and warmly commend it – with very sincere wish that it may be appreciated in a wide circle of readers at home and abroad.⁹⁹

Upon reading *OFH*, however, Traill was disappointed to find that Ellen had included a section “where the subjects are more particularly of a family nature, such as the births, deaths marriages of the second and third generations.”¹⁰⁰ Referring conspicuously to the work as a “memorial,”¹⁰¹ she reveals her feeling that Ellen had fallen short in creating a serious literary work worthy of public audiences. The following passage is proof that Traill, herself, had made a decision that her own letters received from Frances would not be of value to Ellen’s project:

I have myself no letters that would be at all helpful – all that I had that could have been of any value to the work perished in the fire and in after years were so much confined to domestic details only or answers to my own private troubles that I did not preserve many. I think that I looked over what letters of your dear mother’s

⁹⁸ Traill family collection, NAC, Catharine Parr Traill to Ellen Dunlop, 18 December 1889.

⁹⁹ Traill family collection, NAC, Catharine Parr Traill to Ellen Dunlop, July 1889.

¹⁰⁰ Traill family collection, NAC, Catharine Parr Traill to Ellen Dunlop, 18 December 1889.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*

that I retained some time since, but found none that would have been of any literary value to the work.¹⁰²

Haultain, too, believed that domestic details and specific references to family, or “discourses of femininity,”¹⁰³ to use the terminology of Sara Mills, would be trivialized by readers. Ellen knowingly acknowledges this premise about family and domesticity in her preface of the first edition, preparing her readers for possible varied responses to the different sections of the book.

Traill may have been secretly disappointed, too, to see that she, herself, was scarcely mentioned in *OFH*, despite the closeness of the two families and her own special relationships with Frances, Anna, and Ellen.¹⁰⁴ Ballstadt, Hopkins, and Peterman point out the strangeness of this, saying, “it is one of the oddities of *Our Forest Home* that it contains so little concerning the long and sustaining friendship between Frances Stewart and Catharine.”¹⁰⁵ However, despite her carefully worded criticisms and possible disappointments, Traill is gracious in her review of the overall text and makes generous accolades for Ellen’s running commentary throughout, writing, “I am not now able to say much, but heartily rejoice in the work having appeared in print. Much too of *your own* writing is *well done* and *reads well*.”¹⁰⁶ She was deeply moved by Ellen’s representation of her long-deceased friend, and aware of the book’s intrinsic value as a historical record. Emotionally, she affirms her overwhelming reaction to the book:

¹⁰² Traill family collection, LAC, Catharine Parr Traill to Ellen Dunlop, December 1887.

¹⁰³ Mills, 118.

¹⁰⁴ Frances Brown and Ellen carefully address this omission in the 1902 edition. In reference to the then-deceased Catharine Parr Traill, Brown says, “just as she retained to the end of her days the tender memory of by-gone times and beloved friends, so, among the descendants of those very friends will *her* words be loved and her counsel and example followed together with those of the beloved parents and grandparents of whom she wrote so lovingly. (F.B., 1901).” *OFH*, 1902, 146.

¹⁰⁵ Traill, *I Bless You in My Heart*, 272.

¹⁰⁶ Traill family collection, NAC, Catharine Parr Traill to Ellen Dunlop, 18 December 1889.

Your book must prove a valuable document a touching record indeed of past days, old scenes, where many of the aged – now few – settlers of those days will enter into with feelings of deep interest and sympathy. How much more will it be precious to the members of your own family, and not to *those only* -! I for my part read on till the waning light of the short Aft'n forced me to lay the volume aside but could not forbear from dipping again and again into parts further on, which won tears – that I could not restrain and then I became too sad and would read no longer – so that I have not half read the book as yet.¹⁰⁷

Ellen's position as editor of her mother's letters is better understood when examined alongside Jennifer Sinor's handling of her grandmother's diary. Sinor's work, published a century after Ellen's, is, in her own words, a "defense of ordinary writing and takes as its center the ordinary diary kept by an ordinary woman, Annie Ray, who lived on the Dakota plains in the late nineteenth century."¹⁰⁸ Along with diaries, Sinor includes letters in her list of items comprising ordinary writing, and says,

What separates ordinary writing from other (more valued) writing is largely the fact that it does not story, meaning it does not tell a story. Because it is unremarkable – does not mark an event or narrate an idea – it also remains unmarked, unnoticed. The fact that when we talk about writing that matters we value writing that stories is a result of the literary lens we have traditionally applied to written texts. This lens effectively creates a limiting binary that divides writing into that which is storied or crafted and that which is not – the ordinary.¹⁰⁹

Ellen took "ordinary writing," Frances's letters, and created a coherent narrative by editing the content and adding her own commentary. While similar to Sinor in her effort to reclaim a text, however, she is unlike Sinor in her manner of doing so as her subjectivity created an overlay in *OFH* that vastly changed the narrativity of the original letters. Sinor claims that, while relying heavily on an enlightenment ideal of the rational autonomous individual, "being accountable for your own presence in the recovery of a text is important, but not as important as making sure that the writer is afforded agency in

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Jennifer Sinor, *The Extraordinary Work of Ordinary Writing: Annie Ray's Diary* (Iowa City: U of Iowa Press, 2002) 7.

¹⁰⁹ Sinor, 6.

the production of the text in the first place.”¹¹⁰ Ellen has not allowed the story to take its shape from the text, but rather has reshaped the text to tell *her* story, underscoring recent late modern theories of the discursively subjected individual. She has created herself through editing *OFH*, and in doing so, has represented Frances’s life in a manner that is considerably different than the original material would allow. Her representation of the original letters is informed by two connected issues, one being the creation of a narrative with all the gaps filled, and, the other, her own personal subjectification.

While Ellen’s voice is intertwined with the text of the published letters, it is important to appreciate that the new layer represents a valid historical link, in and of itself, to a period in time. Recognizing the contribution of a new layer, Kathryn Carter says, “women’s personal writing creates... a palimpsest, a fact that becomes more obvious as new voices are introduced.”¹¹¹ Carter argues that although women’s primary writings enhance our understanding of history, they are complex and do not represent historical events and experiences in a progressive, linear manner. She says that they “contest and contradict each other”¹¹² and “illuminate the unevenness of historical developments.”¹¹³ David Gerber, too, acknowledges the valuable historical role that descendents play in divulging their own identities through the telling of stories about their ancestors. He says, “to conclude that ... efforts to construct a historical narrative in which to place one’s ancestors and ultimately oneself creates a disembodied and inferior product compared to the vitalizing epistolary contacts of the first generation is to fail to understand its importance for the identity narratives of those who might crave continuity

¹¹⁰ Sinor, 17.

¹¹¹ Kathryn Carter, “Introduction,” in *The Small Details of Life: Twenty Diaries by Women in Canada, 1830-1996*, ed. Kathryn Carter (Toronto: U of T Press, 2002) 6.

¹¹² *ibid.*

¹¹³ *ibid.*

with the distant past while living in their own present.”¹¹⁴ *OFH* is a testament not only to its purported subject matter, but also to Ellen Dunlop, and reflects, in and of itself, a representation of historical significance by a first-generation pioneer daughter.

¹¹⁴ Gerber, *Authors of Their Lives*, 222.

Chapter 3

Private to public: a textual analysis of the progressive re-description of the letters of Frances Stewart

*"You can have no idea how touching it is to me reading the old old times letters, written in the days of my thoughtless childhood."*¹

Ellen Dunlop to Uncle George Kirkpatrick, Ireland, 29 October 1888

Although the thread of textual analysis is woven all through the previous chapters, it is in this chapter that I bring many of the threads together. Chapter 3 investigates specific examples of text in Frances Stewart's letters, following the obvious progressive re-description through the layers, from the original archival documents through Ellen Dunlop's published representation in *OFH*. By looking at the text and sub-text in context, I use specific excerpts to exemplify the types of re-description that emerged. Along with the silences and omissions, these examples identify the class-conscious sensibilities of the editor. This approach provides one measure for extracting meaning from the layers of narrativity, and sheds light on Ellen's seemingly unscrupulous editing of her mother's letters. It must be emphasized, however, that one cannot know the past. There are many gaps, silences, and incoherencies in history. Language creates meaning, rather than reflects reality. Frances seems to be reporting events and feelings, but, if we are the product of texts, she created herself through her writing and was living and writing solidly within a discourse of upper-middle-class, valorous, godly, self-sacrificing women. Frances and Ellen both are subject *of* and subject *to* the discourses in which they are located.

Michel Foucault's and Diane Macdonell's separate positions claiming, respectively, that discourse must be analyzed while considering the "viewpoints and

¹ Kirkpatrick papers, PRONI, Ellen Dunlop to George Kirkpatrick, 29 October 1888.

positions from which people speak, and the power relations these allow and presuppose,”² and that “possibilities for meaning are pinned down and made into definite meanings through the social and institutional position from which the discourse comes,”³ express the core premises for the analysis to follow. Both speak to my belief that the meanings of words and expressions are dependent on who says them and when they are said. Words do not reflect reality; they create it. Such analyses allow for an understanding of what could be said, and what had to be silenced.

The preface of *OFH* is an opportune place to begin as it encompasses aspects that reflect the editor and the period in which she lived, and reveals prevalent literary conventions of the late 19th century. Carole Gerson’s research on prefaces of women’s English-language poetry and fiction books written during the latter part of the nineteenth century reveals that women wrote within a framework of contradictory and changing constraints, a view that is complementary to Sara Mills’ model of diametric discourses of femininity and imperialism during this period. Gerson conducted her study on prefaces written between 1850 and 1940 and found that, while they introduce the main text, as is expected, they also make clear “that the author is requesting visibility for her self as well as for her work and has something distinctive to impart, however briefly or obliquely she may express it.”⁴ She goes on to say that “the woman who composed her own preface usually assumed that the normal purpose of a self-introducing writer was explanation and apology, and the normal tone humility..., [and that] authors’ apologies... are particularly

² Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations* (New York: Guilford Press, 1991) 26.

³ Macdonell, 12.

⁴ Carole Gerson, “The Presenting Face: Prefaces to English-language Poetry and Fiction Written by Women in Canada, 1850-1940” in *Prefaces and Literary Manifestoes / Préfaces et manifestes littéraires*, ed. E.D. Blodgett and A.G. Purdy, [et al]. Towards a History of the Literary Institution in Canada: 3 (Edmonton: U of Alberta, 1990) 57.

prevalent until the 1890s, and almost disappear in the twentieth century, when they are replaced by informative prefaces.”⁵

While recognizing that *OFH* would be classified neither poetry nor fiction, Gerson’s findings are perfectly supported in Ellen’s 1889 preface, which was written by Ellen, herself. Ellen is predictably apologetic and she offers a passive explanation of purpose for her compilation. She writes:

My first idea was that this volume should only be for members of our own family, but so many incidents and events of great public interest are recorded by my mother relating to the early days of the town and country about Peterboro, that I have been persuaded to give it to the public. The many little incidents and observations relating to her own children and household details cannot be expected to interest those outside the family.... As the book was originally intended *only* for the family, it is hoped that these things will be looked upon with a lenient eye.⁶

The above statement is further proof that Ellen had a public audience in mind when she compiled the first edition. And, in further support of Gerson’s findings, the more assertive and informative preface of the second edition (1902) is written by someone other than Ellen, and is short and concise, about half the length of the first. Gerson also found, with only a few noted exceptions that included Traill and Moodie, that, almost all female authors appointed males of prominent standing to write their prefaces. Ellen’s decision to appoint her niece, Frances Brown, a daughter of Kate, to write the preface of the second edition suggests that she had no qualms about adopting a path that, although highly irregular by conventional standards, had already been successfully paved by the two noted authors with whom she had personal association. Unfortunately, the archival material does not reveal how Frances Brown came to be involved with the second edition of *OFH*. Her own words in the preface provide the only clue, in which she says, “so

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ *OFH*, 1889, preface.

many requests have been made from time to time for a second edition of “Our Forest Home” that my aunt has decided to comply with the demand. . . . feeling herself unable to undertake the necessary labor alone, she handed the work over to me, but every change has been made, every additional letter inserted, subject to her oversight and approval.”⁷ That Frances Brown lived in Montreal with her mother and siblings at one time is perhaps the reason that the Gazette Printing and Publishing Company of Montreal was chosen as publisher for the 1902 edition.

Ellen’s decision to focus on Frances rather than on both parents is indicative, primarily, of the availability of an abundance of letters written by Frances; however, it is plausible that there were other reasons that she focused on her, as well. The decision signals a spirit of independence, and represents Ellen’s desire to draw attention to her mother’s life, a life lived in quiet acceptance and under the oppressive rule of her father, a domineering husband who was often depressed and quick to criticize. While searching for the letters in 1888, Ellen revealed to her uncle her awareness of the heavy burden that her mother carried in raising the family and caring for a despondent and unhappy husband. She writes, “my loved father went through bitter trials – he was so unfitted to battle with the hardships he had to bear from his lameness – he could not be active - of course my mother had the more to bear, often had to sustain him when his spirits would be broken - bad health & his fast increasing family.”⁸ This passage requires much reading between the lines. Would it be too speculative to suggest that the ever-recalcitrant daughter took it upon herself to give voice to the genteel woman who quietly sustained a husband and, thereby, their large family of children, in the unfamiliar and exceedingly

⁷ *OFH*, 1902, preface.

⁸ Kirkpatrick papers, PRONI, Ellen Dunlop to George Kirkpatrick, 26 June 1888.

difficult environs of pioneer Canada? In *OFH*, she includes subtle criticisms of Tom from the letters along with references to the anxiety that Frances felt when Tom was depressed. For example, she quotes her mother: "I have such a swarm of little creatures always about me and depending on me, and I may say truly on me alone, for almost everything;"⁹ and,

"Mr. Stewart had a serious illness; for weeks I felt exceedingly anxious. His head was much affected and his mind in a very depressed state... This is a sweet place, and improving rapidly from Mr. Stewart's unwearied pains and exertions, but no one knows what it cost in trouble and anxiety, which really has been so great. I have allowed myself to dwell on this subject too long, it seems selfish to say so much about our affairs."¹⁰

Had Ellen come to understand and appreciate the subservient position that her mother had accepted? It is conceivable that her relief work with its focus on bettering the lives of less fortunate women, combined with the emerging stirrings of the suffrage movement around the time that she was preparing *OFH* for publication, would bring into focus feelings of loyalty towards her mother and the idea of telling the pioneer story based on the woman whom she had seen carry her family amid formidable circumstances. The fact that she had a vast amount of material at hand that reflected her mother's story in all its variant detail was also a contributing factor in this regard.

It is interesting to entertain the above in light of the fact that Ellen had pressure from Traill to publish a book about both her parents. In discussions as early as 1882, as she carefully explored with Ellen the possibility of publishing her own narrative about Frances and Tom, Traill said, "I think it would be according to your long cherished wish that the dear parents should not pass away into forgetfulness in a place of which they

⁹ *OFH*, 1889, 73.

OFH, 1902, 124.

¹⁰ *OFH*, 1889, 115-116.
OFH, 1902, 142)

were almost the founders,”¹¹ and five years later, as it became clearer that Ellen herself would publish something focusing on Frances, Traill reaffirms her position that both parents should be the focus, saying, “the subject is worthy; & the matter full of interest at least it is so to the family & friends of your dear parents.”¹² However, as with her manner in dealings with Haultain, Ellen quietly proceeded to concentrate on Frances, independent of the subtle leanings of her friend.

Ellen is not quite true to her word when she tells her uncle of her intention to leave out her mother’s many “endearing expressions..., expressions of love... [and] the outpouring of her soul in her beautiful religious feelings.”¹³ Some tender expressions are included but have been repressed to increase the relevance of the work to the emerging non-sectarian Victorian audience, proof that Ellen had a public audience in mind as she chose the excerpts, although she claimed that she only had family and friends in mind. The delightfully touching salutations, “ever and ever your own old F Stewart,”¹⁴ and the numerous reminders of the loneliness that defined Frances’s Upper Canadian experience seldom appear. That Frances was “impressed with the belief in an over-ruling Providence, and [that] the whole tone of her letters is of submission and thankfulness, as her life was in simple trust in Him”¹⁵ is allowed in the first edition in the preface, but few references to faith are admitted into the body of the work. The second edition preface does not include reference to Frances’s faith at all, but the volume addresses this just one page over, nevertheless, as the preface of the first edition is included as well. The repression of the “endearing expressions” and the passages dealing with faith reflect

¹¹ Traill family collection. NAC, Catharine Parr Traill to Ellen Dunlop, [summer 1882].

¹² Traill family collection. NAC, Catharine Parr Traill to Ellen Dunlop, 19 August 1887.

¹³ Kirkpatrick papers, PRONI, Ellen Dunlop to George Kirkpatrick, 26 June 1888.

¹⁴ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #269, Frances Stewart to [unknown], 27 May 1826.

¹⁵ *OFH*, 1889, preface.

Ellen's appreciation of the non-sectarian mindset of the Victorian population during this time period, although she, herself, was a devout Christian.

Though the original letters provide occasional evidence of family discordance, textual comparisons reveal that Ellen was consistent in her avoidance of passages about conflict, scandal, and derision; if these appear at all, they are heavily veiled. Of the subjects discussed in *OFH*, Ellen, herself, provides an example of a subject carefully re-described for publication. For instance, she relates a glowing depiction of herself, albeit rather abashedly, saying, "she [Ellen] is a very sweet, dear creature, 'though I say it,' but I do think she has many superior qualities of mind."¹⁶ Her reticent interjection, "though I say it," is changed slightly between editions; it is accentuated with italics rather than parentheses in the second edition, giving the interjection more emphasis, and thereby stressing that the glowing account was not her own. Unfortunately, there is no obvious corresponding original material with which to compare the statement made by Frances. The Shearman sisters state frankly that Ellen "excluded from the published letters any negative references about her own self, although the originals reveal that she was not the perfect person she would have liked to portray."¹⁷ Certainly, Ellen is careful to balance her mother's less than flattering statements about her with her compliments. Minor critical remarks, for which this is no comparative original material, are included alongside favourable character depictions. For instance, the description of Ellen as an "idle and an oddity in many ways, but an amiable, well-intending girl"¹⁸ in the 1836 section appears in both editions and the balancing of "wild" and "sweet" simultaneously

¹⁶ *OFH*, 1889, 169.

OFH, 1902, 243.

¹⁷ Shearman Hall and Shearman, 88.

¹⁸ *OFH*, 1889, 93.

OFH, 1902, 150.

in several instances. The 1854 description, [she] “has fewer faults than most people, a guileless, sweet simplicity, without effort or exhibition of it”¹⁹ appears in both editions, as well; unfortunately, again, the original with which to compare is not available, unless the statement is a rewording of “having a warm affectionate heart & being perfectly free from selfishness”²⁰ taken from an 1856 original letter. And rather tellingly, Frances’s critical assessments of her daughter do not enter into the published text at all. As noted in Chapter 2, instances of Frances admonishing Ellen do occur in the original material, revealing the obvious friction between the two; none of these instances appear in *OFH*.

The narrativity of the text in *OFH* reveals Ellen’s desire to hide certain elements in the family’s experience and to accentuate others. The meaning the reader derives from the published text is often different from that derived from the original material because key facts are missing or have been re-described, thereby compromising the reader’s capacity to understand the actuality of events and experiences. For example, the archival material of the 1850s and 1860s is inundated with references and allusions to issues surrounding the Auburn property. William, Frances’s son, took over Auburn upon his marriage in 1851 and Frances continued to live for a time with him and his family. She eventually moved in with a daughter after agonizing at length about whether she would be best to leave William to manage the property on his own. In subtle reference to discordance between Frances and her son, *OFH* simply relates that Frances had “always observed that it never does for two families to live together.”²¹ The archival material, however, reveals ample evidence of turbulence between the two during these few years.

¹⁹ *OFH*, 1889, 184.

OFH, 1902, 263.

²⁰ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #215a, Frances Stewart to [unknown], 10 November 1856.

²¹ *OFH*, 1889, 173.

OFH, 1902, 248.

By way of example, a worried letter written in 1856 by Frances to William suggests that she has set all differences aside amid her feelings of grave concern about him. In what appears to be a desperate gesture to raise his spirits, she writes:

“Many happy returns of this day to you my dearest William - & may each returning one find you better & happier & prospering in all worldly comforts, still remembering that there is a better life to look forward to, where we may hope for greater happiness than we can conceive here... I hope you may not be ill from fatigue, sitting up so much at night, & this time of year always makes you ill. Do take care of night chills after the heat of the day & put on a coat in time before you feel the dew or chill of evening... I wish you knew how dearly & truly I love you dear Willy, or that I had it in my power to relieve your mind of some of the weights which I fear oppress you at times.”²²

The above is only a portion of an entire loving and tenderly written letter. It is anxious in tone and is written to reach William and comfort him from the core of a mother's heart.

Interestingly, this letter, along with the original 1825 letter that an exuberant Harriet wrote to Frances upon hearing her joyous news of William's birth²³ was in the possession of William's daughter, Anna Maria, and mounted in a scrapbook by her grandson in 1968 next to the above exceptionally loving letter to William. This particular 1825 letter was the *only* such early dated letter in the scrapbook. Did Frances send the 1825 letter to William along with her 1856 letter at an extremely low point in his life in order to impress upon him his importance to her? This would further the suspicion of desperation in Frances's attempt to reach her son. The purpose of this reiteration of Frances's relationship with William during this stormy period is to provide an example of a subject matter of importance to Frances that was suppressed in *OFH*. True, Ellen may not have had access to these two particular letters as they may have been in the custody of

William's family after 1856; however, at least some of the several other letters that detail

²² Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #214a, Frances Stewart to William Stewart, 31 July 1856.

²³ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #126b, Frances Stewart to Harriet Beaufort, 11 October 1825. The title page of the original scrapbook is located in the Jean Shearman donor file, TUA.

Frances's insecurities and feelings of inadequacy in dealing with William, the Auburn property, and her own living arrangements would almost assuredly have been available to her.

The loss of Auburn, a momentous occurrence in the family, is only mentioned obliquely in *OFH*, without detail as to how it passed out of family hands: in 1864, "we have had much adversity from pecuniary affairs having been mismanaged, which has sacrificed much of the property, ... some of them [my sons] are plunged into poverty;"²⁴ and, in 1866, "my dear sons are all making great exertions for all are reduced by the mismanagement of some."²⁵ These references appear in both editions and make no direct allusion to William, who managed Auburn until his death in 1864 in a hunting accident. *OFH* avoids mention, too, of Robert McNabb's alleged swindling of the property from his sister, Louisa McNabb Stewart, William's wife; this successfully accomplishes a re-description of a portion of Frances's life in Upper Canada by withholding critical information about her situation during this period. The class-conscious editor, in accordance with her reverence for the Stewart name, intentionally chose to moderate references to family conflict and to skirt the slanderous activities and mismanagement that led to the loss of the property.

In another example, Ellen intentionally avoids mentioning any discordance associated with her brother, Frank; she barely mentions him at all. An original letter discloses that he is "scarcely ever is at home, & never seems to care for any of his own

²⁴ *OFH*, 1889, 197.

OFH, 1902, 282.

²⁵ *OFH*, 1889, 205.

OFH, 1902, 292.

family;”²⁶ in *OFH*, he just “never cares to be at home.”²⁷ Stewart family oral tradition characterizes Frank as “the bad sheep of the family,”²⁸ and ample evidence in the letters reveals that Frances was deeply troubled by his behaviour. In 1859, she is distraught that he has deserted his wife and two children after four years of marriage to live in the United States. She writes to her aunt in Ireland on this subject, saying,

I grieve to say we have had no tidings of my dear Frank since the wretched letter of last July – written in the depth of despair – his truly admirable little wife is still with her parents, who are aged & not well & require her care the eldest boy little Willie has always been delicate – but little Alexr. the Baby now 20 months old is a fine child I earnestly hope they may prove comforts to their dear Mother.²⁹

Although Ellen entirely excludes her brother’s disreputable conduct from *OFH*, she worked quietly in the background to reconnect him with his kin in later years, as mentioned in Chapter 2. Traill recognized Ellen’s role in the reconciliation, writing, “I am deeply interested in dear old Franks letters. God be thanked that he is a sinful man saved by the Grace of God his savior. How thankful you must be that you have not forsaken the brother through good and evil report have never ceased to love him with sisters love. God reward you Nellie dear for it, as indeed He will.”³⁰ However, true to form, Ellen retained her ethical position by barely mentioning Frank at all in *OFH*, and, thereby, continued to control her presentation of the family to her standards and sentiments. In an 1855 letter Frances writes, “Frank has had a son given him and has

²⁶ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #205, Frances Stewart to Catherine Kirkpatrick, 31 May 1848.

²⁷ *OFH*, 1889, 163.

²⁸ In recent years, David Bate learned that his great grandfather, Frank Stewart, was a bigamist, U.S. Civil War military documents revealing that his second wife was unable to receive a military pension after Frank’s death as he was legally married to a Canadian. Mr. Bate recounts the family story that in 1901, Frank arrived at the home of his eldest son, William B. Stewart (Mr. Bate’s grandfather) in Toronto, and asked the child who answered the door to tell William that his father had come to see him. The story continues that William told the child to tell Frank to leave, but William’s wife intervened and implored that he invite Frank to enter. The wayward father sat down to dinner, became reconciled with his son, and visited him every summer thereafter at the cottage until his death in 1910. (Source of information: Mr. David Bate, Peterborough, 19 October 2005. Oral history narrated with the permission of Mr. Bate).

²⁹ Stewart fonds, TUA, 92-1002, Letter #2, Frances Stewart to an unidentified aunt, 4 April 1859.

³⁰ Traill family collection, LAC, Catharine Parr Traill to Ellen Dunlop, 10 October 1894.

every prospect of doing well, and I trust may in time be led to think more of another and better life.”³¹ She seems to have hoped that through time, he would improve his ways. It is known that Frank took up farming on property left to him in father’s will around this time, having returned home from the United States in 1854 after being away for a few years.³²

The “wretched letter” excerpt quoted above is from an extant original 1859 letter, although Ellen claims that Frances’s letters written between 1857 and 1860 were missing.³³ It cannot be proven, of course, whether the “wretched letter” was available to Ellen, or whether she chose to omit it when she compiled *OFH*; however, the second edition does include excerpts from a few letters from those years that she must have had at hand, suggesting that the letter may have been available. Regardless, she, of course, knew that her brother had deserted his wife and children, as her later efforts to reunite him with family firmly establishes. In private, as she reveals in 1906 to a niece, she felt tenderness towards the brother who had found his way back into family again, saying, “old Uncle Frank, I hope for him again. He felt sorry saying goodbye. He gained all hearts who met him I think.”³⁴

Not only did Ellen withhold Frances’s references to scandalous events that occurred in the lives of the family, she rewords certain excerpts to the extent that they no longer express Frances’s intention. For example, in 1859, Frances wrote to Ellen, “I have been lately much amused looking over old journals I kept 20 years ago! – It brings back

³¹ *OFH*, 1889, 186.

OFH, 1902, 266.

³² Lewis, “From Douro to Dublin: The Letters of Frances Stewart,” 20. The Shearman sisters write that Frank lived in the United States three times, the first time for a few years beginning in 1850, the second time for several years beginning in 1858 (after leaving his wife and children in Peterborough), and the third time prior to his death in 1910 (see Hall and Shearman, 91).

³³ *OFH*, 1889, 189.

³⁴ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #252g, Ellen Dunlop to Eleanor [], 17 July 1906.

many old scenes & events to my mind;”³⁵ although only a photocopy exists, this letter appears to have been an original. In the first edition of *OFH* in the 1860 section, Ellen allows of Frances: “I am not such a good correspondent as I was twenty years ago,”³⁶ and in the second edition, in the same year, 1860, “I am copying out old journals that I kept twenty years ago. It is very amusing to read over old remarks.”³⁷ The difference between the original and the second representation, especially, is the most significant. Frances *reading* her old journals and *copying* them are two very different activities and have implications for the study of the primary research material. Frances copying her own material begets another copy of correspondence in Frances’s hand! And, might Frances have edited as she copied? As if this is not problematic enough, we cannot be entirely sure that the two renderings of the excerpt in the two editions are actually representations. They may be reiterations from independent original letters that no longer exist, especially given the variant gist of each. Such a quandary is impossible to solve.

Ellen was not averse to embellishing her mother’s pioneering story; however, she may have had some unexpected help. According to the first edition of *OFH*, upon arriving in Douro in 1823 at her, as yet, unfinished log house, Frances discovered that “where the chimney was to be was a large opening in the roof,” and upon waking her first morning, “saw the stars looking down through the aperture left for the chimney.”³⁸ The archival account reveals a less dramatic image, saying, “the upper part of the chimney was built with boards – as the frost made it impossible to go on with mason

³⁵ Stewart-Dunlop fonds, TUA, 94-007/1/8, Letter #6, Frances Stewart to Ellen Dunlop, 5 December 1859.

³⁶ *OFH*, 1889, 190.

³⁷ *OFH*, 1902, xxii.

³⁸ *OFH*, 1889, 24.

work,”³⁹ and made no reference to waking to the stars in the morning. By the second edition, Ellen has dropped the stars, saying only, “the upper part of the chimney was built with boards, as the frost made it impossible to go on with the mason-work.”⁴⁰ The accounts are interesting, as Ellen may have been filling in detail that she, herself, remembered, wakening to the stars shining through an opening in the roof in the morning. Frances, in the original, on the other hand, may have kept silent on this fact, thinking that it would horrify her readers in Ireland. The fact that Ellen dropped the reference to the stars in the second edition may also suggest that family members had taken her to task over the statement.

The layers of narrativity are complex; the letters are not only re-described in the two editions of *OFH*, but also across a few complicated archival layers, and even in the case of specific passages, in an entirely different publication, a book by Thomas Poole written in 1867.⁴¹ The description of the precarious last few miles of the Stewarts’ journey from Cobourg to Douro in February 1823, for example, as they made their way to the new log house on the shores of the Otonabee River, provides one good case in point of the multiple layers, including the Poole layer. The following is an explication of the layers:

1. In an original letter written in Frances’s hand, the above-mentioned leg of the journey is told to Maria Noble, a portion of which is reiterated here for the purposes of comparison:

³⁹ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #98, Frances Stewart to Maria Noble, 24 February 1823.

⁴⁰ *OFH*, 1902, 29.

⁴¹ Thomas W. Poole, *A Sketch of the Early Settlement and Subsequent Progress of the Town of Peterborough and of Each Township in the County of Peterborough* (Peterborough: Office of the Peterborough Review, 1867) 147-150.

We found that we could not cross the river as we expected, the ice having given way... so we sent a man across on foot to tell Mr Reid to send his oxen & sleigh... & we determined to walk across at a place called the "Little Lake" about 2 miles lower down... but this day was to end all our travels, & that gave us spirits to proceed. With vigor we walked to the Little Lake & across it through deep snow which came above our ankles – John Reid carried Ellen & Mr. Reid Bessy – the workmen carried our bedding, bags & provisions everything else we left at Scotts Mills. At this side of the lake we found the patient oxen – our luggage & ourselves we packed into the sleigh & we proceeded in the shades of evening to Douro – drove nearly 5 miles thro' woods.⁴²

We can safely assume that this document is the original and not a copy, as it is in

Frances's hand and includes postal markings. As an interesting aside, a notation on the letter, in another hand, reveals that it was copied by Maria and sent to Harriet Beaufort. Maria's copy does not exist in known collections.

2. Three other archival copies of the above excerpt exist, none of which are in Frances's hand. Not substantively unlike the original, the message is expressed differently. The three versions, luckily for ease of discussion, are very similar to each other, one of which is duplicated below:

When we arrived at the banks of the river, near the Mills, we found that the ice had given away, so that the sleighs could not cross... we sent a man across to beg our friend Mr Reid... to send his oxen & sleigh to a part of the river called the "Little Lake" two miles lower down & we determined to walk across.... our travels were nearly at an end & that gave us spirits to proceed with vigor through the snow which came above our ankles. The friends who came from the opposite side to meet us carried the two youngest children: the workmen carried our bedding & every thing else was left at the mills, with this assistance we continued to cross, & being soon packed into the sleigh we proceeded in the shade of the evening to our home, through nearly 5 miles of wood.⁴³

⁴² Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #98, Frances Stewart to Maria Noble, 24 February 1823.

⁴³ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #277, Frances Stewart to Maria Noble, 24 February 1823. Number 277 is bound in a brown coverlet with "Miss Brown, Peterboro, Water Street" on the cover. It is possible that this is a manuscript copy sent to or prepared by Frances Brown for the 1902 edition of *OFH* as Frances Brown helped with the 1902 edition (see the 1902 preface). A partial typescript variant is located in 94-006, vol. 4, p. 956, Trent University Archives. This typescript is an exact duplicate of part of the handwritten 97-023 Folder 1, Letter #3, also located at Trent University Archives but received in the Archives from a different source. Notation on the document reveals that it was compiled by Charles Stewart, Frances's son, and sent to Frances in 1871. It is bound in a coverlet and entitled "Extract of Our Forest Home."

3. It would appear in the following that Ellen adds her own substantive twists to Frances's trek from Little Lake to the log house in both the first and second editions of *OFH*. She makes the snow deeper, has her mother walking the last five miles, and snuffs out the lantern, to boot. She describes the trek in these words:

The Little Lake which we were to cross was frozen over, but not being considered safe yet for teams we were obliged to walk over, our children and baggage being carried by our servants and some men who kindly assisted. Our friends had sent an ox-sleigh to the edge of the lake to meet us... The snow was about two feet deep, and late in the night when we were in the dark forest it began to snow again.... the sleigh being heavily loaded I was obliged to walk. Our lantern, unfortunately, became filled with snow and the candle so wet that it could not be re-lit with the tinder-box.⁴⁴

However, maybe Ellen had access to a *second* version written by Frances - for Thomas Poole. Poole quotes Frances in over three pages of published text, and prefaces her long quotation with the following introduction:

We cannot better portray the difficulties and privations, as well as the heroism incident to the settlement of the township of Douro, at the period referred to, than by quoting entire the following touching narrative of the personal experiences of the wife of one of the first settlers, who kindly furnished it in response to our appeal for information in regard to those early days.⁴⁵

Sure enough, he quotes Frances as saying that the snow was two feet deep, and that she had to walk, and that the lantern and candle could not be lighted, as they were wet with snow.⁴⁶ He also includes a section whereby Frances writes, "in the morning, on looking up, I saw the stars through the aperture left for the chimney."⁴⁷ This is a very complicated further dimension in determining Frances's true voice. If in fact Poole has accurately quoted Frances, this would mean that Frances herself wrote a new version. The

⁴⁴ *OFH*, 1889, 23-24.

OFH, 1902, 26.

⁴⁵ Poole, 147.

⁴⁶ Poole, 148.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

complexities do not stop there, however. Tom, Frances's husband, wrote to Basil Hall in 1828:

The next evening we reached Scott's Mills, had our luggage and children carried across the river... Having arranged our bedding and the younger children on the sleigh, we proceeded; *the snow nearly knee-deep* [emphasis mine]... we lay down to rest, being pretty well fatigued; and upon looking upwards from our beds, *we saw the sky through the roof* [emphasis mine]; and have often, during the time we lay in that manner, *amused ourselves watching the stars passing, and others appearing* [emphasis mine].⁴⁸

In light of Tom's corroborative version of events, it is unlikely that Poole embellished Frances's story, himself; furthermore, his initial remark in which he claims to be quoting Frances has a ring of truth to it. Does the existence of the Poole version suggest that Frances edited segments of her original journal, the journal from which she later composed her letters, in order to supply him with a more captivating story, or, does it mean that she used details from Tom's letter to Basil Hall to flesh out a narrative of her experiences for Thomas Poole? Certainly, she had seen Tom's letter, as she had expressed her disgust with Hall's *Travels in North America* in 1832: "I am vexed at his giving such a miserable representation of our Village which even in its infant state, might have looked better had he done it justice."⁴⁹ (It is not clear whether she is vexed with Tom or Basil Hall). Of course, Frances and Tom shared the same experiences upon arriving at the Douro log home as they travelled there together; therefore, even had Frances not seen the Hall publication, it is not at all odd that her version in Poole's book is factually similar to Tom's. The *OFH* account and the Poole account contain a few phrases that are exactly the same, strongly suggesting that Ellen "quoted" her mother from Poole's book. There is a chance, on the other hand, that Ellen had access to a *copy*

⁴⁸ Hall, 313-314.

⁴⁹ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #274, Frances Stewart to Harriet Beaufort, 19 July 1832.

of the account that Frances made for Poole; such a copy, however, does not exist in known archival collections. One wonders, as well, whether the more captivating story of the trek is the true story, the original version sent in 1823 being more in line with the sensibilities of her worried readers in Ireland, who anxiously awaited word that she had arrived safely. It is impossible to sort out these conundrums.

4. Surprisingly, the second edition of *OFH* includes the version found in the first edition and the Poole book, *and another version* a few pages later that more closely resembles Frances's original letter to Maria Noble. At the risk of belaboring the discussion about snow, it is, however, still deeper in this occurrence than Frances originally describes, and less so than in her second description. The reference to the ankles is left out; it is just "deep,"⁵⁰ connoting a depth less than the two feet claimed by Ellen a few pages earlier. That Ellen had access to the original sent by Frances to Maria is verified in her commentary. She says, "another, and more complete account of this memorable journey is to be found in a letter to Miss Noble dated Feb'y. 24th, 1823."⁵¹ Frances Brown, who assisted Ellen in compiling the second version, claims in her preface that her aunt had received many more letters from Ireland after the first edition was published. One would like to think that the original to Maria Noble was one of these and that Ellen had not seen it before she published the first edition; however, Ellen told her uncle in 1888 that she had just received a bundle of her mother's letters from Maria, meaning that she almost surely had it in her possession before she published the first edition, but chose the more colourful version instead.⁵²

⁵⁰ *OFH*, 1902, 29.

⁵¹ *OFH*, 1902, 27.

⁵² Kirkpatrick Papers, PRONI, Ellen Dunlop to George Kirkpatrick, 29 October 1888.

It is critical to understand that *OFH* provided Ellen with an instrument for telling a story - her story. Bernadine Dodge has observed that, "reconstructing the past from memory, text, or image, requires a narrative – a reconceptualizing of events and experiences to make them sensible, rational, coherent, and frequently, to make past events serve a contemporary moralizing purpose."⁵³ The fact that Ellen cut large segments of text, reordered events, and made subtle alterations to dates proves that she did not intend simply to regurgitate the original themes of narrativity. Frances's letters were the basis and the impetus for the work, but oral tradition and personal memory factored immensely into Ellen's compilation. When all is said and done, there is no harm in the snow being deeper, no matter whose claim it was. One could imagine the story being retold dozens of times in Ellen's lifetime, not to mention the fact that she may have remembered parts of it herself, having being there. With the stars shining through the hole in the roof, the story sounds better, and becomes the *truth* after being retold so many times. Through time, the original story becomes hazy, even with hard evidence. The embellishments and elaborations become intertwined with the not so readily available original accounts, and delineation between fact and fiction is obliterated. Ellen's frequent commentary supports the theory that oral tradition and her own memory figured into the re-description of her mother's life. When Frances wrote her letters, she was careful in what she told her readers. She would not have her loved ones worrying unduly, especially knowing that they were horrified that she and Tom had emigrated in the first place. They also did not need to know that she trudged unceremoniously through five miles of two-foot deep snow in the dark, even if it was true.

⁵³ Dodge, 19.

Although the focus of this thesis does not call for a word-for-word comparison of the two editions, it appears that the first edition was republished in its entirety in the second edition, right down to the preface. The second edition is built upon the first, and thus might explain the inclusion of two fairly different accounts of the same occurrence in the same publication, as in the above example. The variant representations of the journey between Little Lake and the Douro log house effectively expose and exemplify the multiple factors that are at play in the progressive re-descriptions of the textual material across the many layers. They have assorted meanings and reflect different intentions at each rewriting. It is important to remember that by the time Ellen compiled her version of Frances's life, the readers were family and friends, generations removed, or, a paying public, a very different audience than that for whom Frances wrote.

I am startled to know that some people perceive Frances as Peterborough's "snobbish" pioneer, a perception that I can only attribute to the depiction of her in *OFH*. (On second thought, such a perception could perhaps reflect observers' attitudes and sensibilities, too). Granted, class and ethnicity are woven into almost every statement that Frances makes, but what of the loneliness that overshadowed her entire existence after she immigrated? That she missed her loved ones is captured in *OFH* but with not nearly the same emphasis that her experience demands. Because most people generally know Frances from their readings of *OFH*, one must assume that the imbalance in the book and Ellen's choices of phrasing in her editing have contributed adversely to her mother's persona. To illustrate, Ellen appears to have incorporated several untruths in order to elevate the family name. For example, there are no originals for some of the more compelling images related to the visit in 1826 of Sir Peregrine Maitland, Peter Robinson

and several other authorities. She claims that her mother named Peterborough, an important testimony, and allegedly quotes from one of the letters, saying, "T- [Tom] says Mr. Robinson shook his hand almost off,"⁵⁴ and "he [Sir Peregrine Maitland] talked to me a good deal both before and after dinner, as he thought proper that I should take precedence, and consequently I sat between him and Mr. Robinson."⁵⁵ Statements such as these may reflect actual letters that are no longer available and that do indeed make such claims, or they may be untruths and indicative of the heightened sense of class-consciousness that was instilled by Frances in her children. Ellen was cognizant of a societal position that she held as a member of one of Peterborough's earliest pioneer and genteel families. She frequently refers to people of stature or high authority associated with her family, such as the acclaimed author Maria Edgeworth and meteorologist Francis Beaufort, both of whom Frances knew as a young girl, and the Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, Sir Peregrine Maitland, who personally approved Thomas Stewart's grant of land in Douro Township soon after their immigration.⁵⁶ While Ellen emphasizes the upper echelons of society connected with her family and minimizes her mother's personal feelings, Frances, in the original accounts, emphasizes kinship connections, and by mere fact, some of these include people of social prominence. At the same time, she provides many details about her servants, especially Betty who immigrated with the Stewarts in 1822.⁵⁷ According to Frances's original account about an accident that Betty had during the winter of 1823, she and Tom were attentive to her

⁵⁴ *OFH*, 1889, 50.

⁵⁵ *OFH*, 1889, 53.

⁵⁶ Hall and Shearman, 65.

⁵⁷ Betty Delaney was unhappy living in the bush and left the Stewarts two years after immigrating with them to Upper Canada. Through time, she re-established a relationship with the family, and after her husband, Peter Taylor, died decades later, Betty moved from Ireland upon Frances's request to care for her son, William, and his family (see Crosson, 131).

needs while she convalesced. Frances says, “one night my poor little maid Betty slipped on the ice at the back door, fell & broke one of her ribs in two places as her side came against the handle of a tub. Tom & I laid her on a Matrass [*sic*] in our room & had her bled, & early next morning had the Doctor to see her, who ordered low diet, saline draughts & Quiet – so she lay there for some days.”⁵⁸ Ellen, however, marginalizes Betty in her version of the event, saying, “the servant fell, while carrying a tub of water, on the icy steps and broke some of her ribs. So my mother had her hands full.”⁵⁹ In referring to Ellen’s account in *OFH*, Elizabeth Jane Birch writes, “here is one example of how an Irish servant is marginalized on the fringe of a story and the reader never hears her voice or her impression of this unfortunate experience.”⁶⁰ Birch has precisely identified an example whereby Frances was re-described by Ellen through later editing. By emphasizing events relating to powerful and well-known people and by marginalizing experiences that involve the lower classes, Ellen effectively creates an image in line with her own sharpened class sensibilities. This example reflects a difference in the attitudes of the two women towards the servant class. Frances depended on her servants and worked alongside them; she needed their help in ensuring the family’s survival, and valued their companionship, especially in the early years after immigrating to the isolated township. Ellen, on the other hand, did not live in isolation as a married woman, separated from family and friends, and, unlike her mother, who raised 10 children and a few others, had only a few dependents at any one time, herself. Ellen also had power that came with affluence, a fact that contributed to her heightened sense of class awareness.

⁵⁸ Stewart fonds, TUA, 78-008, Letter #98, Frances Stewart to Maria Noble, 24 February 1823.

⁵⁹ *OFH*, 1889, 17.

OFH, 1902, 19.

⁶⁰ Birch, 32.

Her financial status would ensure that she could distinguish herself from the labouring class through the types of work that she was required to do, and the latest commodities of the burgeoning industrial revolution would be within financial reach.

The topics chosen for inclusion in *OFH* are noticeably unbalanced. The reference to Ellen's son's death provides a good case in point. Durham died suddenly at the age of two in 1850. Certainly, his death was a traumatic and painful event for both Ellen and Frances, made more so because the Episcopal clergyman who administered at the funeral failed to offer words of condolence to the family or to enter into conversation that would help to relieve their sorrow. One learns about the minister's actions in *OFH* through a letter written by Frances for which there is no original. Although the minister is only identified as "Mr. T--,"⁶¹ it is very likely that Frances was describing the Reverend Taylor of St. John's Church in Peterborough with whom she had been disgruntled a few years earlier when Tom died. Frances was no more pleased with the clergyman on the occasion of Durham's death: "I was vexed and disgusted with our pastor, I fear he has little feeling in a spiritual sense for his flock. I never found any sort of comfort or pleasure from one of his visits in any kind of trial."⁶² The fact that Taylor officiated at Durham's funeral in 1850 confirms that the family was still associated with the Church of England, even though the stirrings of defection to Presbyterianism had been planted years earlier. The account of Durham's death and the perceived ill treatment by Taylor in *OFH* is odd because it represents an imbalance. It would appear that Ellen chose to publish Frances's account of Durham's death specifically and to the exclusion of other such traumatic events in her siblings' lives. Effectively, she fills a gap in her own narrative by

⁶¹ *OFH*, 1889, 166.

⁶² *OFH*, 1889, 166-167.

using *OFH* as a vehicle to express her contempt for a minister who failed to fulfill a role that she expected him to in a time of extreme sadness. This instance speaks to Ellen's editing decisions and is further evidence that *OFH* is Ellen's story too, not only her mother's.

The examples chosen for analysis in this chapter reveal a number of ways in which Frances was misrepresented in *OFH*. Had Ellen named her book such that it deflected emphasis from her mother and included reference to her own agency, perhaps the reader could more contentedly separate and identify the issues around agency while simultaneously appreciating the importance of Ellen's contribution.

Conclusion

For over one hundred years, researchers have had access to the letters of one of Peterborough's earliest British immigrants through Ellen Dunlop's *OFH*. During the last quarter century, some of the original letters comprising the publication have become available also, thanks to family descendents who have donated these historical documents to public archives for permanent preservation. Comparative analyses reveal that many of *OFH*'s published letters have no original counterparts, and this lends particular importance to the publication, as it includes first-hand accounts available nowhere else. From the perspective of the twenty-first century, however, it has become popular to pass over the publication and devalue it in light of the obvious editing imposed upon the letters by Ellen. One must realize that it is by the fortuitous circumstance that many letters have been saved, that we are able to make comparative analyses and measure the textual anomalies. It is the availability of the comparative documentation that has enabled us to identify the fact that Ellen's compilation hinged heavily on her own experiences and her own socio-cultural framework. We can, therefore, begin to appreciate the work for the textual artifact that it is.

The *OFH* version of Frances's immigrant experience is now embedded in histories of Upper Canada and Peterborough, and is referred to in numerous studies of pioneer women. Ellen is to be credited for having created a far-reaching awareness of her pioneer family. However, the book is viewed with some skepticism, as must be all historical reconstructions. Ellen's claim that Frances named Peterborough¹ as a compliment to Peter Robinson is one assertion that has been called into question.

¹ *OFH*, 1889, 58.

Unsupported by an original letter, it appears that the claim represents more than an embellishment or post-facto reconstruction – it appears to be an actual untruth. Although there is no concrete documentation that identifies just how Peterborough was named, Elwood Jones has established through comprehensive research that the name is attributed to the Hon. Zaccheus Burnham.² Born in New Hampshire near a town named Peterborough, Burnham was a land surveyor and a member of the Family Compact, and also a large-scale entrepreneur whose interests included promoting the Newcastle District in government circles. Jones has determined that the name of choice was political, saying, “the name was special, and no government would forget that this was a town founded on promises of continuing support.”³

Ellen’s version of the naming had gone unchallenged in Frederick Delafosse’s 1927 history of Peterborough’s St. John’s Church,⁴ but by 1953, Thomas Needler in *Otonabee Pioneer*⁵ was skeptical that Frances had suggested the name. He does concur with Ellen, however, that Peterborough was named in honour of Peter Robinson:

It was on this occasion that “Peterborough” was officially decided upon as the name of the new town. [Frances’s] daughter, editing her letters, makes the simple assertion that this was done at Mrs. Stewart’s suggestion. Whether or not it was in confirmation of usage already more or less current informally, the pleasing fact is that the name lives as a fitting tribute to Mr. *Peter* Robinson.⁶

Jones would agree with Needler that the name did not originate with Frances, but would disagree that Peterborough was named in honour of Peter Robinson. No one questions

² Elwood Jones, “The Naming of Peterborough.” *Heritage Gazette of the Trent Valley*. 8.4 (February 2004) 5.

³ *ibid.*, 8.

⁴ Frederick Delafosse, *Centenary History: St. John’s Church, Peterborough, 1827-1927* (Peterborough: The Review Press, 1927) 31-32.

⁵ G.H. Needler, *Otonabee Pioneers: The Story of the Stewarts, the Stricklands, the Traills, and the Moodies* (Toronto: Burns & MacEachern, c1953).

⁶ Needler, 30.

that Frances was present at the 1826 meeting at Government House⁷ with Maitland, Burnham, and others when "Peterborough" was chosen, but Stewart family oral tradition may have skewed particular aspects of the event, such as the naming. Ellen's assertion in *OFH* reflects her own childhood memory of a story that she had no reason to doubt, that, combined with family oral tradition, the desire to enhance the family's good name, and possibly, access to an original account in one of Frances's letters, whereas Jones's findings speak to the official naming procedure, which he determined by analytically assessing a knowledge base derived from his research conducted one hundred years later. Unfortunately, there seems to be no absolute, concrete proof in the matter. Is it possible that two ideas converged and seemed serendipitous to those assembled, i.e. the name "Peterborough" to honour both Peter Robinson and Zaccheus Burnham?

Ellen is very successful in *OFH* in presenting Frances as a honourable and upright woman of the genteel class. Histories by Edwin Guillet (*Pioneer Days in Upper Canada*)⁸ and (*The Valley of the Trent*),⁹ The City and County of Peterborough (*Peterborough: Land of Shining Water*),¹⁰ Alex Edmison (*Through the Years in Douro*),¹¹ and Martin, McGillis, and Milne (*Gore's Landing and the Rice Lake Plains*),¹² all have used *OFH* as their major source for accessing information about Frances and all portray her most favourably and with utmost respect. Albeit, for the purposes of interpretation for

⁷ Government House was located on a property that is near the current-day intersection of Simcoe and Water Streets in Peterborough (southwest corner).

⁸ Edwin C. Guillet, *Pioneer Days in Upper Canada* (Toronto: U Toronto Press) 1933.

⁹ Edwin C. Guillet, ed. *The Valley of the Trent* (Toronto: The Champlain Society for the Government of Ontario, 1957).

¹⁰ *Peterborough, Land of Shining Water: An Anthology* (Peterborough: City and County of Peterborough, 1967).

¹¹ Mrs. D. Amos, "The Stewarts and Reids Settle in the Backwoods," in *Through the Years in Douro (Peterborough, Ontario), 1822-1967*, ed. John Alexander Edmison (Peterborough: A.D. Newson, 1967) 11-14.

¹² Norma Martin, Donna S. McGillis, and Catherine Milne, *Gore's Landing and the Rice Lakes Plains* (Cobourg: Hayne's Printing, 1986).

these general histories, the authors' accounts might not have been much different even if they had had access to the original letters.

The references to Frances in more analytical works dealing with particular subject areas pertaining to pioneer women or pioneer experiences are more problematic.

Catharine Anne Wilson extends Ellen's theme of an affluent upper class family to her work, "Reciprocal Work Bees and the Meaning of Neighbourhood."¹³ Citing Frances's account in *OFH* of the raising of Auburn, Wilson contrasts the Stewart's preparations of lavish meals for the workers with the more common fares normally provided by families hosting a bee. She concludes that "the Stewarts had succeeded in meeting their guests and their own expectations of fitting hospitality, given their station in life, and had confirmed their position of superiority in the neighbourhood."¹⁴ (No doubt, friends and neighbours volunteered more readily for a bee on some knowledge of what quality the fare would be). Unfortunately, there is no original letter with which to compare the published account of the bee and it is, therefore, impossible to verify whether Ellen accurately presented Frances's version of the events of the raising. The long rendition in *OFH*, regardless, provides another example of the class-conscious editor's choice of material for inclusion and serves to strengthen the perception of the family's superior standing in the community.

In a chapter called "Carders of Wool, Drawers of Water: Women's Work in North America," in *Canadian Women: A History*¹⁵ by Alison Prentice [et al], Frances's

¹³ Catharine Anne Wilson, "Reciprocal Work Bees and the Meaning of Neighbourhood," *Canadian Historical Review*. 82.3 (September 2001). Frances Stewart's account of the bee is located on pages 174-176 in the 1902 edition of *OFH*.

¹⁴ Wilson, 447.

¹⁵ Prentice, [et al].

reference to the household duties that her daughters performed is included. The authors quote her from *OFH*:

Anna Marie is the general overseer of the household concerns, who makes all the preserves and pickles, cakes, etc. She also has the care of Johnny, the third boy, who is now five years old.... Ellen mends all the stockings for the little boys and repairs their clothes. She has the care of George in particular who is three; besides this she is manager and caretaker of the poultry. In spring, she attends to the sowing and raising of plants and nurseries of young apple trees. Bessie is in charge of Charlie, the infant, she is always busy and can make most of her own underclothes and knits.¹⁶

Again, there is no original counterpart for this letter in the archival material with which to compare the text. Although abridged by Prentice [et al], the section as it stands in *OFH*, includes not only the duties performed by each of the girls, but also refers to Anna and Bessie's physical appearance. Frances describes their appearance to the exclusion of Ellen's: Anna "is taller than I am, her face is not pretty, but her countenance is sensible and pleasing," and Bessie "is a very merry, active, fidgety little personage; she is a brunette and is considered like me."¹⁷ Does the fact that there is no reference to Ellen's appearance reflect the original composition, or does it characterize further editing by Ellen and cast doubt, therefore, on the certainty of the representations about household tasks chosen for inclusion in *Canadian Women: A History*? Quoting verbatim from *OFH* is risky, as it is proved in several instances that Frances is not necessarily represented accurately. Archival research presents many challenges. However, with the late modern loss of reliance on objective empiricism, we can move forward confidently, acknowledging that we can never encompass the past in a reconstructed rendition. Since all history is unknowable, *OFH* citations must be considered valid.

¹⁶ Prentice, [et al], 69. This quote is taken from *OFH*, 1889, 80-81.

¹⁷ *OFH*, 1889, 80-81.

Other writers, too, have accorded Frances the status that Ellen so determinedly strove to portray. Robertson Davies in his epilogue to the two plays, *At My Heart's Core* and *Overlaid*¹⁸ attributes *OFH* as one of his sources for the first play; he writes:

Mrs. Stewart, gentlest and most humorous of the three [Frances Stewart, Catharine Parr Traill, and Susanna Moodie], never ceased to be an Irish lady of the upper class in her attitude toward other people; it was not that she constantly insisted on rank – she was much too real a lady for that – but that it never occurred to her to think that in a new land social values might be different.¹⁹

Charlotte Gray, citing *OFH* in *Sisters in the Wilderness*,²⁰ uses Frances as one of her primary accesses to Traill and her life, and, too, casts Frances as a genteel woman who was regarded with great respect by those who knew her.

Perhaps the trade-off for the heavy editing is Ellen's own commentary which at times provides information about the history of Peterborough that is not found anywhere in the available archival letters written by her mother. She gives her own first-hand depiction, for instance, of Scott's Plains before it was named Peterborough²¹ and describes the turmoil at the time of the 1837 Rebellion.²² Frances's extant letters, surprisingly, seldom mention events of historical significance. By interjecting elements of her own lived experience, Ellen gives readers access to historically important material. As editor, she had some obligation to provide an enriched historical context for change and evolution, especially when Frances's letters were lacking in this respect. For example, she devotes almost four consecutive pages to her childhood memory of the native aboriginals,²³ recounting, for example, fascinating detail about early Christian

¹⁸ Robertson Davies, *At My Heart's Core* and *Overlaid* (Toronto: Clark, Irwin, 1966).

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ Charlotte Gray, *Sisters in the Wilderness: the Lives of Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill* (Toronto: Viking, 1999).

²¹ *OFH*, 1889, 43-44.

²² *OFH*, 1889, 95.

²³ *OFH*, 1889, 58-61.

conversion efforts. As might be expected, the natives in Ellen's depictions are stereotyped. Both Frances and Ellen regard the native as "other;" however, Frances's observations, while sketchy, are less qualitative than Ellen's. Ellen's natives were "strange wild savages of the forest"²⁴ from a vantage of 60 years hence, and she recalls feeling terror as they approached through the woods:

Oh, what a terror to us children to see these strange people coming through the trees from the river, rolled up in a blanket, red leggings, moccasins on their feet, long black hair matted and hanging loose over their face and shoulders, red eyes always turning about looking at us with great curiosity, trying to bargain for their articles.²⁵

Such an interjection by Ellen has implications for the reader's perception of Frances.

OFH is presented as a compilation of excerpts taken from letters written by Frances.

Distinguishing Ellen's voice from Frances's is not easy, and the two voices become entangled in the reader's memory. The manner in which Ellen unobtrusively weaves her commentary in and out of the principal text, sometimes without distinguishing punctuation, facilitates this effect and contributes to the re-description of her mother.

In this thesis, I have entwined the concept of historical causality with less rigid elements of Foucauldian poststructuralism to construct my analyses of the discursive context of the variant versions of Frances Stewart's letters. While recognizing that language is governed by rules set by society, I have demonstrated that words, in and of themselves, do not reveal the "truth." Elements of history and the realities of people's lives affect and determine the variances of meaning that can be taken from any word or groups of words. Joan Sangster addresses the view that different forms of consciousness are in fact regulated by historical parameters. She maintains that, "while it is important to

²⁴ *OFH*, 1889, 58.

²⁵ *ibid.*

analyze the way in which someone constructs an explanation for her life, ultimately there are patterns, structures, and systemic reasons for these constructs which must be identified to understand historical causality.”²⁶ I have looked at many factors and contingencies affecting the lives of Frances and Ellen, factors relating to class, gender, and ethnicity, and the experiences of their actual lives, all while remembering Sangster’s caution that “we do not want to lose sight of the totality of the historical picture.”²⁷ These factors and contingencies were primarily examined in the first two chapters, and possibilities for meanings in words and actions were explored. This process formed the basis for the more in-depth analysis of the progressive re-description of specific examples of text in the third chapter. *OFH* is much more than a simple regurgitation of letters in a heavily edited state. The retelling of Frances’s life in carefully manipulated text by a loving and protective daughter is provocative, yet it provides a fascinating record made at a particular time and place and is a link to real past lives.

²⁶ Sangster, 12-13.

²⁷ Sangster, 12.

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APPENDIX A

Genealogical Reference¹

The Children of

Thomas Alexander Stewart (1786-1847) & Frances Browne Stewart (1794-1872)

Anna Maria (1817-1889) m. Thomas Hay 21 Nov 1843	Eleanor Susannah (1819-1907) m. Charles Dunlop 25 Feb 1845	Elizabeth Augusta (1821-1823)	Elizabeth Lydia (1823-1893) m. Edward Brown 24 May 1848	William (1825-1864) m. Louisa McNabb 31 July 1851	Francis Thomas (1827-1910) m. Joan Brown 24 May 1854
John (1828-1917) m. Annie Johnston 24 May 1854	George Alexander (1830-1917) m. Cecilia Ward 26 Aug 1856 m. Frances McCormack 25 June 1867	Charles Edward (1833-1879) m. Charlotte Ellis 9 Aug 1860	Henry Louis (1834-1880) m. Georgina Innis 3 July 1861 m. Caroline Mathias 21 Sept 1872	Catharine Mary (1837-1924) m. Robert Brown 4 Nov 1856	

Legend:
m. = married

¹ Genealogical Reference adapted from Elizabeth Shearman Hall and Jean Shearman's *A Sense of Continuity: The Stewarts of Douro*. Rev. ed. Toronto: Pro Familia, 1993.

**Territory inhabited by the Stewarts, Reids, and Traills
during the nineteenth century in the Peterborough region**

