

Louise Manny



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Written by Donna Harriman

Illustrated by Dawn MacLean and Cindy Barry

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Judy Arnold
President
Miramichi Literacy Council Inc.
P.O. Box 534
Miramichi, NB
E1N 3A8
(506) 773-6734
judy960@hotmail.com

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LOUISE MANNY

CHAPTER I

What is a tree without its roots? What is a people without its past?

—Victor Hugo

These are two lines which were chosen by Louise Manny and J.R. Wilson for the title page of their book “Songs of the Miramichi.” It seems to be a saying that Louise Manny believed all her life. Most of her well-known works have to do with history. Each one shows her great love for people as well.

Louise Manny was born in Gilead, Maine in 1890. Her parents moved to Newcastle when she was three years old. Even at this young age, she was very smart. She learned to read between the ages of three and four.



Louise at a young age

Louise went to St. Mary's Academy and Harkin's Academy in Newcastle. She completed secondary school at Halifax Ladies' College. Miss Manny learned to speak French during a year at Ursuline Convent in Quebec. From there, she went on to McGill University to study French and English. She graduated in 1913 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree.

After Miss Manny graduated from McGill, she went back to Halifax Ladies' College, this time as a teacher. She stayed in Halifax until her father became ill. After this, she came back to the Miramichi to work for her father's company. Men who worked for her said, "she was smarter than three men and a boy."

CHAPTER II

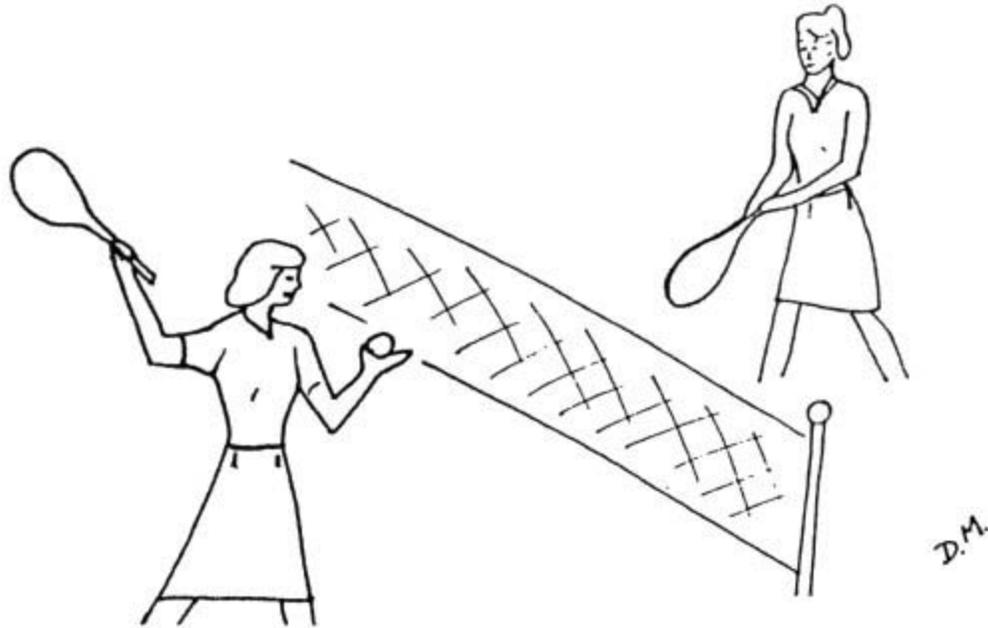
Louise Manny had a great love for books and for the Miramichi. It was likely for this reason that she began recording Miramichi History. This was not an easy job. There was no library on the Miramichi when she began. People had small libraries in their homes. It was felt that there was no need for a public library. When the idea of a public library was brought up, it was refused. It was felt that people would not use a library. There were too many other things to do. Although this made Miss Manny angry, it did not slow her down. She found her information in other places. But she continued to hope for a library.

As busy as Louise Manny was recording history, she always found time to write other things. She wrote in the weekly newspaper. She also wrote for magazines. Her works are filled with historical facts that are of interest to people on the Miramichi. She wrote about other parts of Canada as well. Because of her research, she was often asked to speak on historical matters.

Miss Manny also kept a journal. A journal is a book in which people write about things they have done. Some just keep thoughts in their journals. Louise Manny called her journal, "Trivial Aspects."

The writings in this journal show many sides of Louise Manny. She was very smart, fun-loving and well-educated. She also enjoyed sports. In her journal she often talks about tennis and badminton. In the journal she writes about a neighbor who disliked the idea. She felt that ladies should not spend so much time playing tennis and badminton. Louise's mother told the neighbor that she herself liked badminton better than housework. This statement was unheard of in the 1930's.

No matter what comments were made about this matter, Louise continued to play tennis and badminton. She was still playing in the 1950's. Although she really liked tennis, she also enjoyed playing bridge.



During her later years, Miss Manny wrote many books. They were called, “Ships of the Miramichi”, “Ships of Kent County”, and “Ships of Gloucester.” The records she used had a lot of fact in them. She made her books more interesting by adding stories of the men who worked on the ships.



CHAPTER III

Miss Manny had a good friend in Max Aitken, Lord Beaverbrook. Like her, he was not born on the Miramichi. He moved here with his family when he was very young. His father was a Presbyterian Minister in Newcastle in the 1880's. Like Louise, Max came to love the Miramichi and its people very much.

In 1947, Max Aitken "opened up a new world", to Miss Manny. "Why don't you go out and collect New Brunswick Folksongs?", he asked. "I'll send you a fine recording machine." She did not believe there were many folksongs to be collected along the Miramichi. The only folksong she could remember was one Max's brother used to sing. This one was called, "Peter Emberly." Max sang her the folksong he liked best. "The Jones Boys." He told Miss Manny that there were many more. He told her that she would have a lot of fun collecting these folksongs. From this idea came a wonderful collection of folksongs. These folksongs did not come only from the Miramichi. There were also a few that had been sung by people who had come to the Miramichi from far-away places. There were some in French as well. People came from all over to sing for Louise Manny. They had heard about her collection and they wanted to have their folksongs saved.

An interesting thing happened to Louise when she was collecting these folksongs. She wanted to have a native Indian song in her collection. She asked a lady to sing a native raindance song. The recording machine upset her a little and the song did not sound good. Miss Manny asked her to sing it over again. The lady was wearing her best dress. She was afraid that if she sang the song, she would cause a big rainstorm. She did not want to get her dress wet. Louise Manny talked her into singing the song several times. Later that night, it did rain very hard.



After Miss Manny collected the songs, she took the collection to the Radio station. The station was then called CKMR. At first, the program was played on Wednesday afternoons. Crews of woodsmen would quit work at 2:00 p.m. on Wednesday to listen to the program. They were warned not to do this or they would be fired. The men did not listen to the warnings. Every Wednesday afternoon they would steal away to hear Miss Manny's radio program. This was at last changed by Louise herself. She had the program moved to Sunday afternoons.

One of the things that Louise Manny is most famous for was the Miramichi Folksong Festival. In 1957, she played a large part in the beginnings of the First Annual Miramichi Folksong Festival. She put the Festival together for several years in a row. Each year she would receive letters from friends from far away. They would say that they had heard that the Festival had gone very well. This Festival is now held every August. People come from all over Eastern Canada and the U.S. for this Festival. This is the only such Folksong Festival in Canada.

Miss Manny said that someone who was not used to the music might not enjoy it. The people were more storytellers than anything. They were singing about the Miramichi. They sang about weddings, folksongs and woodsmen and many other events. In this way they were telling the history of the Miramichi.

The people who go to the festival always have a good time. They enjoy the music and the people singing it. The Festival is not the same as it was at first. It's missing Miss Manny's touch. Also, a number of the old singers that were in the first Festival have since died. But, Miramichi people and others hope the Festival will still be held for years to come.

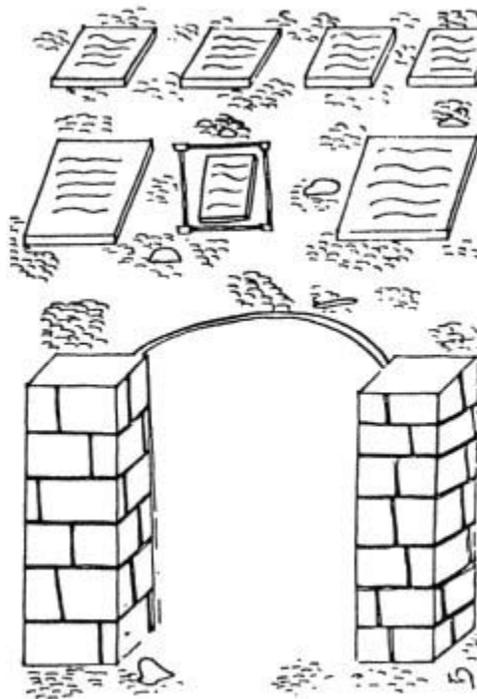
The folksongs were also collected together in a book by Louise Manny and J.R. Wilson. In a letter written in 1961, Louise brought up the idea. At that time, Mr. Wilson was studying at Rutledge, University in N.J., U.S.A. In a return letter Wilson thanked her. He said she had given him a new interest in his studies. His reply to her question of writing the book was yes. They were worried about where they would get the money for the book. But Mr. Wilson said, "We'll write the book come hell or high water." The book was written, thanks to aid given by a Canadian Council Grant. It can be found in Miramichi bookstores. "Songs of the Miramichi" is a collection of one hundred and one folksongs and the written music. It also has the background on a number of the songs. In this way, many different parts of the Miramichi History have been saved.



James R. Wilson

CHAPTER IV

In 1946, lord Beaverbrook began to restore The Enclosure. At that time, it was called Wilson's Point. Miss Manny was given the job of looking after the clean up. "Not a tree was to be cut or a wild flower uprooted without her say so." Mrs. Jared Maclean, Miss Manny's housekeeper, recalled how hard Miss Manny worked on this job. She said Miss Manny went up there every day. It took three years of hard work to clean up the park. The headstones had to be repaired and reset. The Enclosure is now a beautiful garden of flowers and trees. It is also a camping ground that opens for the summer. Lord Beaverbrook presented it to New Brunswick as an historic park. It is to be kept as an historic park. It is to be kept as a remembrance of the first white people to come to the Miramichi.



Remains of graveyard at the Enclosure.

Lord Beaverbrook was very happy with Miss Manny's work. For this reason, he asked her help in the plans for "The Square" in Newcastle. The Square was given to Lord Beaverbrook by Northumberland County. Miss Manny was to once again oversee the job.

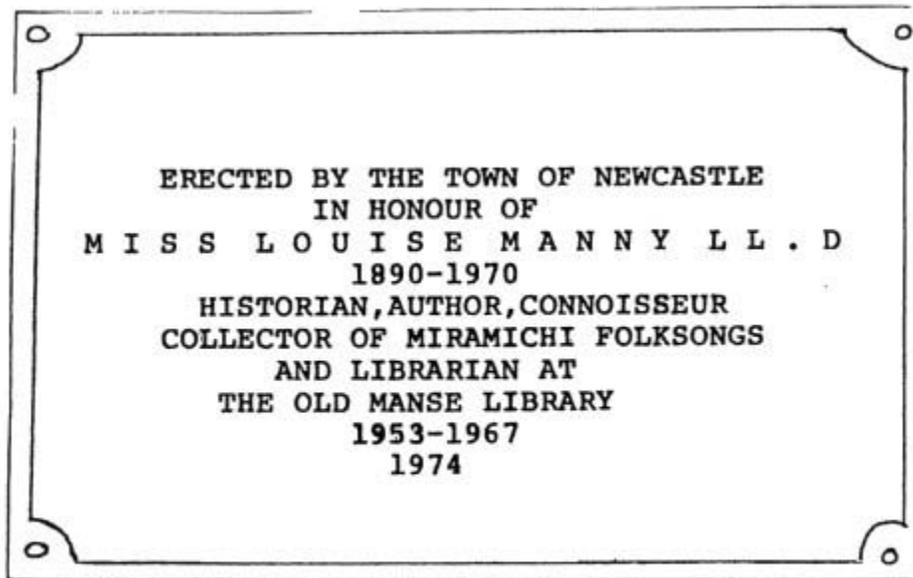
In 1952, Lord Beaverbrook bought the old Presbyterian Manse where he had grown up. He gave Louise Manny the job of restoring the Manse as a library. At last, Louise's dream of having a library was to come true. The Old Manse Library already had about five thousand books. They had been sent mostly from England by Beaverbrook. The house was to be changed as little as possible. After the library was completed, Louise Manny became the librarian. She stayed at this job for fourteen years.

CHAPTER V

Miss Manny always kept very busy with things that helped other people. Throughout her life, she worked with many different groups. Each of these groups in some way gave a service to others.

Over the years, Miss Manny was given many honors. In May 1961, she was given an Honorary Doctor Of Laws Degree from both St. Thomas and the University of New Brunswick. The National Council of Jewish Women named her Woman of the Century. She was given this honor for her work in collecting and keeping history. In 1966, she was honored by the Association for State and Local History. In 1967, The Town of Newcastle honored her on her retirement. In 1969, A New Brunswick mountain was named for her. Mount Manny is found forty-one miles northwest of Newcastle.

In 1974, a plaque was placed near the entrance of the Old Manse Library. This plaque was to honor Dr. Manny. The plaque was uncovered at a special get-together in Newcastle for it 75th year as a town.



Plaque in honor of Miss Manny

As the plaque says, Dr. Louise Manny passed away in 1970. At the time of her death many people spoke highly of this great lady. She will long be remembered for what she gave to the Miramichi. The Enclosure and The Square in Newcastle had her touch in their beginnings. She will be remembered as well, for the Miramichi Folksong Festival. Her greatest pleasure was in being able to have a part in opening the Old Manse Library. She was a woman who had given her life to researching and keeping Miramichi History alive.



Old Manse Library

WORD LIST

library

journal

tennis

badminton

folksongs

collect

Acknowledgement:

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