

L.M. MONTGOMERY'S
RAINBOW VALLEYS

The Ontario Years, 1911-1942

Edited by Rita Bode and Lesley D. Clement



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To Ella, Emily, and Evie,
a new generation of Montgomery readers

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L.M. MONTGOMERY'S RAINBOW VALLEYS

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Introduction

RITA BODE AND LESLEY D. CLEMENT

On 28 January 1912, after a ten-month silence, L.M. Montgomery once again took up her journal writing. Much had changed since her last entry of “Saturday, Mar. 4, 1911 Cavendish, P.E.I.” Under the January date, as before, she added her place of residence. Her first comment is her response to seeing “The Manse, Leaskdale, Ont.” on the page before her: “I look at the above entry,” she writes, “rather stupidly, since I have written it down. It seems unreal.”¹ The feeling of dissociation in her words conveys a profound sense of the disruption that would continue to characterize the Ontario years, from 1911 through to her death in April 1942.

Montgomery copied into her January journal entry brief passages from a notebook of occasional jottings made throughout the “past strange year,” but mostly, the long January account is a retrospective record of life-altering events. Not unexpectedly, she movingly recounts her grandmother’s final illness, death, and funeral; perhaps more of a surprise are the muted and ambivalent words with which she describes her marriage, after a five-year-long engagement, to the Reverend Ewan Macdonald, asserting her “*despair*” at her loss of freedom, but also her contentment. The most enduring sense of troubling change, however, comes through her keen awareness of physical displacement; for Montgomery, dislocation carried the deeply painful effects of emotional severance. She recalls her “dear old room” in her grandmother’s house, declaring, “I loved that little room more than I ever loved another place on earth – and more than I shall ever love any place.” In her explanation for the lapse in her journal writing, she equates the loss of human

life through death with the loss of place: “I long shrank from the pain I knew would be attendant upon the writing of grandmother’s death and leaving Cavendish.” Thinking back to the previous June, as she was preparing for her marriage to Ewan in a fortnight and also parting from her cousin Bertie McIntyre, who was going on holidays, she recalls feeling “that I could *not* endure any further rending of old ties.” She wonders, more mournfully than happily, “Could all that a new life had to offer me compensate for the things the old life took in its going?”² Such an open-ended question eludes answer. Montgomery’s new life would come to mean many things, but perhaps most significantly it meant the permanent move to Ontario where she would spend almost half her lifetime. It proved to be an eventful half, reflecting the vicissitudes of the first four decades of the twentieth century that buffeted and buoyed her in both her personal and professional life.

When late in September 1911 Montgomery returned to Canada as Mrs Ewan Macdonald following her trans-Atlantic honeymoon, she did not go to Prince Edward Island. Instead, after stops in Toronto and Uxbridge, she and Ewan travelled to Leaskdale, the small rural Ontario community in Durham County approximately seventy kilometres northeast of Toronto. For the previous two years, Ewan had held a position as the minister of St Paul’s Presbyterian Church in Leaskdale, with responsibility also for the Presbyterian parish in the nearby community of Zephyr, ten kilometres to the northwest. After spending almost thirty-seven years of her life on her beloved Island, Montgomery felt “discouraged, heartsick and homesick” on first arriving in Ontario with its “starless darkness” that seemed “merely one long *blot* of wet shadow.” Before long, however, she was revelling in the region’s beauty, in its “October sunshine and crimson maples, with snug, prosperous farmsteads.”³ These extremes suggest the beginnings of a pattern that for the next thirty years, until her death, would inform Montgomery’s attempts to make Ontario her home.

Two more moves would interrupt – and disrupt – Montgomery’s Ontario life. After fifteen years in Leaskdale, Ewan received the call to the two-point charge of Presbyterian churches in Norval and Union (just east of Glen Williams) in Halton County, about one hundred kilometres southwest of Leaskdale. Montgomery felt regret at

leaving the community where her two sons, Chester and Stuart, had been born in 1912 and 1915, but also excitement over the new opportunities the move presented, especially since Norval, fifty kilometres from Toronto, was much more accessible to the world of publishing, friends, and cultural activities. Although she had owned a car since May 1918, she had never learned to drive. Now she would no longer be dependent on Ewan (and eventually Chester) to drive her but instead could take the high-speed radial train. In just over an hour, she could travel from Norval either northwest to Guelph or southeast to Lambton Mills, on the western edge of Toronto at the intersection of Dundas Street and the Humber River. Alternatively, she could alight at any of the one hundred stops along the seventy-four kilometre Toronto–Guelph Interurban line.⁴

Initially, one of the appealing features of Leaskdale for Montgomery had been that it was “so small – only about ten or twelve houses – that it is almost as good as the pure country,” as she writes in her journal. But she was disappointed in the manse, “built of white brick in the ugly ‘L’ design so common among country houses,” and even more disappointed that it had “no bathroom or toilet.”⁵ In addition to its proximity to Toronto, Norval promised the physical comforts for which she longed. Ewan’s position there meant “a nice manse with electric light and bathroom,” all features that appealed to Montgomery in her multiple roles as minister’s wife, mother and homemaker, and professional writer. Yet, despite these attractions, she laments the departure: “My home that I have loved. And I must leave it.” She details her loss: “Oh, how I hate the thought of leaving! And the thought of new places and people ... The beautiful woods behind Mr Leask’s, the leaf-hung corner of the side-road, the lovely hill field beyond with the elms on its crest. I love these things and grieve to leave them. But what has been my life but a succession of leaving things I loved?”⁶

The final Ontario move was even more disruptive. In 1935, seven years before her death, Montgomery bought her first house, on Riverside Drive next to the Humber River in what was then the village of Swansea. Today, Swansea is the part of Toronto just south of vibrant Bloor Street Village and west of the High Park area. Montgomery had low hopes of finding anything to her liking in the city, but when the

realtor, Mr Lepage, drove her and Ewan along Riverside Drive in early March, she saw “a new house with a ‘for sale’ placard on the lawn” that she “liked the look of ... at first sight.” Her journal entry continues: “I think it was when I saw the ravine I knew I must have the house.”⁷ Montgomery’s heartfelt reaction to the Riverside environment appears through Jane of *Jane of Lantern Hill* who finds in “the new Lakeside development on the banks of the Humber” “a pretty country village” featuring “hills and ravines with ferns and wild columbines growing in them and rivers and trees ... the green fire of willows, the great clouds of oaks, the plumes of pines and, not far away, the blue mist that was Lake Ontario.”⁸

Despite the misunderstandings that led the Macdonalds to leave Norval more willingly than they might otherwise have done, despite the “worries over Chester” that had “darkened” their final years there, and despite the welcome anticipation of furnishing the new house, “Journey’s End,” and her joy in its woods and vistas, Montgomery acknowledges that she had “put deep roots into the Norval life and it was absolute anguish to be uprooted.” As with her departure from Leaskdale, her words recall her feelings on leaving Cavendish almost a quarter of a century earlier. She vacillates between feeling “an exile” in Toronto and the sense that Journey’s End is “home,”⁹ an ambivalence that characterizes her Ontario years from beginning to end.

Years have a tendency to overlap through memory, but Mary Rubio’s biography, *Lucy Maud Montgomery: The Gift of Wings*, provides a telling insight into the significance of the Ontario years for Montgomery scholarship. Rubio devotes one section of approximately 125 pages to Prince Edward Island, while the Ontario period takes up three sections of about 400 pages. The challenges, gratifications, and responsibilities of Montgomery’s Ontario years were more than most people experience in a lifetime. Ewan’s illness took a great toll on her. Her sensibilities and needs and her great creative drive made their own relentless demands. Montgomery’s life was complicated, but she was also a complex person, multi-faceted, gifted, and highly productive. In Ontario, she raised a family; she fulfilled the duties of a minister’s wife by contributing substantially to community life through parish work; she maintained her relationships with friends, neighbours, and rela-

tives in reciprocal visits, often extended, and written correspondence; she participated in professional organizations that advocated for copyright protection and recognition of Canadian literature. Most significantly for Montgomery scholarship, she wrote fiction that confirmed her place, established by the early *Anne* novels, in not just Canadian letters but world literature.

L.M. Montgomery's Rainbow Valleys takes a new direction in Montgomery studies by shifting the focus away from Prince Edward Island to Ontario with its new associations and influences for the years that Montgomery lived in Leaskdale (1911–26), Norval (1926–35), and Toronto (1935–42), and vacationed in Bala (1922). Its title alludes to the title of the author's 1919 novel, set in the years immediately preceding the First World War, and anticipates a number of related themes explored throughout the chapters as they apply to both Montgomery's life and literary output: geographical features of the landscapes with which she engages, the social and economic shifts of the first four decades of the twentieth century, her ever-changing moods and states of mind, and the personal and professional highs and lows of her life during her Ontario residency as she sought to establish a new home and carve out new writing spaces. Home and belonging are themes that have been addressed in much Montgomery scholarship within its Prince Edward Island context; however, the Ontario years generate a new urgency because of Montgomery's keen sense of displacement in time and place. Although it is clear that in the decade before her death she became increasingly disillusioned, perhaps even pathologically depressed, there is no consensus on whether, even during her earlier years, she lived primarily under the rainbows or in the valleys. This critical debate is established immediately in the first three chapters of this volume, from the tensions "between valleys of depression and rainbow-coloured affirmations" that Elizabeth Waterston outlines in chapter 1, through Mary Beth Cavert's contention in chapter 2 that the Leaskdale years "were rich in joy and sorrow" despite the manse being "the memory-filled home that summoned her deepest grief," to Margaret Steffler's conclusion in chapter 3 that, for complex reasons involving loss and the manipulation of memory, "Montgomery was never fully at home in Ontario."¹⁰ Seemingly contradictory conclusions such

as these which the volume's chapters sometimes draw provide telling insights into Montgomery's tumultuous inner life as she negotiated personal and global events. These early chapters also establish a paradigm for the interconnections among the volume's chapters; drawing on a body of mutual references, they nonetheless approach Montgomery's experience and work from different perspectives that create a dialogue or, more accurately, a developing and expanding conversation about central scholarly questions concerning Montgomery's Ontario years.

The organization of the volume's content, framed by a prologue and epilogue and with a poetic interlude, reflects another motif that the chapters reveal: the extent to which Montgomery's life-writings, and indeed her life, were a consequence of self-fashioning and self-dramatization. The sense of displacement and the need for self-fashioning are directly related to the rapidly changing world of Montgomery's Ontario period, which is bookended by two world wars and characterized by increasing commercialization and commodification of values and even people, changing tastes in literature, and the struggles among those empowered with developing and promoting the direction that Canadian literature would take.

Studies of the familial, cultural, historical, and geographical associations and influences on Montgomery's writings of the Prince Edward Island years are productive, abundant, and ongoing. The importance of Ontario has not been ignored in Montgomery scholarship, especially in the work that invokes her journals, but it is rarely the focus of study and most often receives only limited acknowledgment. In one of her notebook jottings during her year of journal silence, Montgomery records, on 23 May 1911, her mingled joy and anxiety on receiving her copy of the newly published *The Story Girl*. "I wrote it in my dear old room [at Cavendish]," she recounts, "where I shall never sit and hold pen more." She then continues, "I have been haunted, ever since leaving home, with a nasty obsession that I can never write again."¹¹ Her sense that these feelings are "foolish" turned out to be true because the Ontario years became her most prolific. In addition to numerous poems¹² and short stories, she added six books to her *Anne* series, four while in Leaskdale – *Anne of the Island* (1915), *Anne's House of Dreams* (1917), *Rainbow Valley* (1919), and *Rilla of Ingle-*

side (1921) – followed by two others while she was living in Toronto, *Anne of Windy Poplars* (1936) and *Anne of Ingleside* (1939). Early in her residence in Leaskdale, she produced *The Golden Road* (1913), a sequel to *The Story Girl*. In Leaskdale, she also created Emily and the three novels in which Emily is the heroine – *Emily of New Moon* (1923), *Emily Climbs* (1925), and *Emily's Quest* (1927) – and *The Blue Castle* (1926), the one novel set entirely outside of Prince Edward Island, in which she gratified her imaginative responses to Muskoka. Also in Leaskdale, she recopied her PEI journals and produced her autographical work, *The Alpine Path* (1917). Two further novels written in these years would not be published until later: *Magic for Marigold* (1929) and *A Tangled Web* (1931).

In Norval, she wrote the two *Pat* novels, *Pat of Silver Bush* (1933) and *Mistress Pat* (1935), the latter published a few months after her move to Toronto. She used her new city as a partial setting for *Jane of Lantern Hill* (1937), moving her heroine between the two provinces that informed her own life so strongly. Unsurprisingly, the happy ending of *Jane of Lantern Hill*, with Jane's reunited family, involves plans for “winters in Toronto ... summers at Lantern Hill.”¹³ Finally, there is the posthumously published *The Road to Yesterday* (1974), which Benjamin Lefebvre has edited, restoring the deleted sections, as *The Blythes Are Quoted* (2009). The chapters in this volume examine the literature that Montgomery produced during her Ontario years within their Ontario context, reflecting the complexity of her psyche, her life, and the period.

This volume begins with a prologue by Waterston (chapter 1) that discusses Montgomery's *Rainbow Valley* as a novel capturing in its plot and characterization, its images and themes, “valleys of depression and rainbow-coloured affirmations,” which, as mentioned above, reflect the personal and professional changes Montgomery was undergoing in the early Leaskdale years and anticipate the contours of her life thereafter. As Waterston states, “The intriguing new title with its double references to physical elements of sky and earth promises a new emphasis on place rather than person.”¹⁴ The first paired chapters, Cavert's “‘To the Memory of’: Leaskdale and Loss in the Great War” (chapter 2) and Steffler's “‘Being a Christian’ and a Presbyterian

in Leaskdale” (chapter 3), examine two topics – war and religion – that disrupted the lives of those living in even such a small community as Leaskdale and that entered into Montgomery’s fiction and life-writing as she struggled with an unsettling sense of displacement in Ontario. Cavert contextualizes these disruptions in the interconnected stories of those to whom Montgomery dedicated *Rainbow Valley* and *Rilla of Ingleside*: three young men from Leaskdale who lost their lives in the Canadian war efforts of the First World War, and Montgomery’s cousin and best friend, Frederica Campbell (Frede), who died in the influenza pandemic of 1919. Steffler, in turn, explores Montgomery’s articulations of a deep aversion to the “oppressive religion” that she associated with Presbyterian doctrines, an aversion that she could not keep out of her responses to Ewan’s melancholia. Through Montgomery’s contemporary and retrospective entries in the Leaskdale journals, “the recopying of the diaries of the PEI years, and the composition of the first *Emily* novel – all written out of the Leaskdale manse,” Steffler traces “the complex impact of religion” that followed Montgomery from her PEI childhood into her Ontario adulthood.¹⁵

In the next section, on the changing roles of women, Laura Robinson and Caroline Jones explore some of the shifts, both societal and personal, that affected Montgomery’s attempts to fulfil an already demanding range of female expectations, as well as her fictional strategies in depicting both the obstacles and gratifications of women’s circumstances. Robinson’s “‘A Gift for Friendship’: Revolutionary Friendship in *Anne of the Island* and *The Blue Castle*” (chapter 4) focuses on the two novels that frame the Leaskdale years to show how Montgomery accommodates her depictions of female friendships to align with changing mores that saw same-sex relationships as increasingly suspect, while at the same time finding subtle ways to problematize the heterosexual happy marriage plot as women’s ultimate fulfilment. Jones in “The New Mother at Home: Montgomery’s Literary Explorations of New Motherhood” (chapter 5), explores Montgomery’s “complex engagements with literary motherhood over the course of her actual motherhood,” which allow her not only to position herself as daughter to her own lost mother but also “to reflect upon – and construct – herself as mother in varying phases of her own and her sons’ lives.”¹⁶

While loss and grief enter into most of the volume's discussions, William Thompson's and Melanie Fishbane's perspectives make Montgomery's anguish their central focus, exploring various ways in which her deep sorrows over personal loss and global strife emerge in her art. In chapter 6, as the title "The Shadow on the House of Dreams: Montgomery's Re-Visioning of Anne" indicates, Thompson examines how Montgomery's growing sense of a darkening world marks "a change in the fictional life of Anne" most clearly evidenced in the two *Anne* books, *Anne's House of Dreams* and *Rilla of Ingleside*, appearing in the immediate aftermath of the Great War. In arguing moreover that these two novels "best represent the intersection of Montgomery's public and private lives," Thompson invokes the writer's consciousness of the need to create a persona "appropriate for public consumption" as revealed in her autobiographical work, *The Alpine Path*. The relationship between the journals and her other writings, Thompson suggests, is ultimately less a "divide" than a "point of connection in understanding."¹⁷ Fishbane, in chapter 7, "'My Pen Shall Heal, Not Hurt': Writing as Therapy in *Rilla of Ingleside* and *The Blythes Are Quoted*," approaches Montgomery's grief from the perspective of the practising artist, raising questions about the extent to which writing is therapeutic and also addressing the role that suffering plays in creativity, as manifested in both the writer's life and literature. These and other chapters suggest that the interplay among the journals, the life that those journals record, and Montgomery's fictions is endlessly layered, nuanced, and intricate, their boundaries dissolving and reshaping into newer manifestations of both Montgomery and her characters.

Katherine Cameron's poem, "L.M.M.," provides a brief interlude midway through the volume. Her poetic tribute to Montgomery, with its suggestions of the inner life masked by Montgomery's public persona, stands as a transition between the previous chapters' discussions of anguish to the following chapters' focus on literary inspiration, connections, and influences.

While places, people, and meaningful occupations and roles inform Montgomery's search for a sense of belonging during her Ontario years, her intense, enduring involvement with literature, as witnessed in the extensive markings in her books now housed at the University of Guelph

Library's Archival and Special Collections, help her make significant transitions between past, present, and future times and places, personally and culturally. In the next section, "A Sense of Place: Reading and Writing," Emily Woster's and Natalie Forest's respective chapters foreground the importance of Montgomery's active engagement with books, both as reader and writer. Reading and rereading, and writing and rewriting, create productive cycles for Montgomery the author but also offer intricate crossings in which singular intents grow into multifaceted productions of both the self and her literary output. Drawing on theories of women's autobiography, memoir, and reading practices, Woster, in "Old Years and Old Books: Montgomery's Ontario Reading and Self-Fashioning" (chapter 8), focuses on Montgomery's "textual occupations" to argue that her "Ontario reading records, separate from and enfolded in her journals, can be read as an autobiographical act, one facet of her complex, layered self-definition." In the next chapter, "(Re)Locating Montgomery: Prince Edward Island Romance to Southern Ontario Gothic" (chapter 9), Forest turns her attention to Montgomery's increasingly nuanced readings of place each time she revisits the Island and returns to Ontario. Memories, distant and recent, begin to collude and destabilize a sense of reality of which she had once felt sure. Building on previous studies that engage Freud's concept of the uncanny in interpreting Montgomery's work, Forest suggests that Montgomery's "real life, as she presents it in her journals, is as 'rich' in the uncanny as her fiction," thus circumventing Freud's privileging of the fictional uncanny as more intense.¹⁸ Forest situates the *Emily* books and several of the short stories associated with them as developments in a literary tradition that Timothy Findley would later designate as Southern Ontario Gothic and that align Montgomery with the shadowy spaces of Alice Munro's small-town environments.

Montgomery's remarkable ability for full and intense experience could never be limited to a singular interest, and her engagement with the natural world was as central to her emotional and intellectual core as was her life in books. The chapters in the next section, "Travels to Muskoka: Commodification and Tourism," engage Montgomery's discovery of what Rubio designates as northern Ontario's "lake district"¹⁹ and her subsequent explorations of it in *The Blue Castle*, her one novel set en-

tirely in Ontario. Vacationing with her family in Bala in the summer of 1922, Montgomery revelled in the waters, the woods, and the “cool silence ... the gods of the wild wood welcomed back their own,” she writes in her journal.²⁰ Although long valued for its vivid descriptions of nature’s beauty, Montgomery’s Muskoka novel, as Holly Pike and Linda Rodenburg both suggest, nonetheless challenges the expected approaches to nature through the kinds of appreciation evoked. Both chapters suggest the importance for Montgomery of accessing nature and place on the heroine’s and her creator’s own terms. She seems deliberately to resist separating the effects of nature and culture in her quest to bring happiness to her heroine, Valancy Stirling, who, at the novel’s opening, would appear among all of Montgomery’s female protagonists to be the least likely to achieve fulfilment. In “Propriety and the Proprietary: The Commodification of Health and Nature in *The Blue Castle*” (chapter 10), Pike acknowledges Montgomery’s Romantic belief in the restorative powers of the natural world but also looks to the influences that the region’s developing tourism in the first decades of the twentieth century exerts on her representation of Valancy’s struggles to find her place in both the natural and social orders. Pike contends that Montgomery allows the “culturally and commercially mediated experience of Muskoka” marketed by the “emerging tourist industry ... as a healthy lifestyle destination” to facilitate Valancy’s movement toward “the freedom, health, and happiness that, despite her being surrounded by Muskoka’s natural environs her whole life, were previously inaccessible to her.”²¹ Rodenburg’s chapter, “Bala and *The Blue Castle*: The ‘Spirit of Muskoka’ and the Tourist Gaze” (chapter 11), more directly contextualizes Montgomery’s stay in Muskoka as a tourist experience through frameworks provided by contemporary theories on tourism and travel. In interweaving Montgomery’s account of her stay in Bala with the novel that this travel inspired and with the experience of contemporary Montgomery-related tourist sites, Rodenburg explores the possible ways in which visitors to the Bala Museum are called upon to move beyond the stance of “passive museum-goer or recreational tourist ... to recreate actively the story of Montgomery in Muskoka,” a re-creation that positions the tourists’ “critical imaginings at the centre of ... [their] own integrated counter-text.”²²

Muskoka enchanted Montgomery, but her Ontario locations also facilitated other forms of respite that soothed, stimulated, and challenged her in different ways. The volume's final section, "Life in Toronto: Professional and Cultural Links," turns to exploring the opportunities afforded by proximity to Toronto's amenities of her Ontario residences in Leaskdale, Norval, and Swansea. The chapters in this section show that the Montgomery who embraced the natural world with so much genuine pleasure and appreciation was also eager to engage actively in professional meetings and public speaking, to attend exhibitions, theatre, and moving pictures, and to disburse her money sometimes too liberally at Toronto's large department stores. When leaving Norval, moreover, she looked towards Toronto for her "Journey's End." In "Advocating for Authors and Battling Critics in Toronto: Montgomery and the Canadian Authors Association" (chapter 12), Kate Sutherland examines Montgomery's adaptation of the executive skills that stood her so well as a minister's wife and contributor to the parish community to a range of significant initiatives in the promotion of Canadian letters and authors. She traces Montgomery's involvement with and contribution to the Canadian Authors Association (CAA) to analyze the complicated gender politics of a Canadian literary scene attempting to position itself as realist and modernist at the expense of the popular and sentimental literature that Montgomery's work represented. Sutherland suggests the close links between the history of the CAA and the direction of Montgomery's late career. In the next chapter, "Toronto's Cultural Scene: Tonic or Toxin for a Sagged Soul?" (chapter 13), Lesley Clement approaches Montgomery's urban experience as a final expression of the significant conflicts that informed much of her life. Clement examines the "irremediable tension" between Montgomery's attraction to Toronto, with its cultural environment, community of writers, and affirmation of her status as a successful author, and "her growing consciousness of herself as a consumer product." In recounting Montgomery's attendance at and reaction to various theatrical productions and other cultural events, Clement investigates the toxic effects of Montgomery's celebrity status when celebrity "depends on exhibiting only those personae that the public is willing to consume."²³ She argues that Montgomery's engagement with theatri-

cal productions, most notably G.B. Shaw's *Saint Joan*, turns her from the self-fashioning that her journals regularly evince to self-dramatization in which she emerges at the centre of a tragic narrative that both sustains and dooms her.

The volume's epilogue, "Dear Grandmother Maud on the Road to Heaven" (chapter 14), is Kate Macdonald Butler's letter to her famous grandmother whom she never knew in person but initially came to know well through her father's memories and stories of growing up in Leaskdale and Norval and then attending the University of Toronto. Butler's own memories include her father "poring over the contents" of the journals, "these old, worn, rather shabby, black ledgers," and sometimes reading aloud from them to Kate and her brothers, who "could see and hear from his voice how important these journals were to him." Montgomery's reputation and writings, as Butler details, remain an important family legacy and responsibility, to be treated, as her father treated them, with "respect."²⁴ Her speculations about what Montgomery's responses might be to the global and wired world of the twenty-first century remind us that, although rooted firmly in place – whether Prince Edward Island or Ontario – readers' and critics' responses to Montgomery's creative imagination have been transcending boundaries of multiple kinds for over a century.

An appendix traces briefly, as its title "Montgomery's Ontario Legacies: A Community Presence in the Twenty-First Century" suggests, Montgomery's enduring and vibrant place in Ontario through public spaces, performances, museums, and educational sites. An interview with executive members of the Lucy Maud Montgomery Society of Ontario, conducted with the help of university students Kristina Eldridge and Chloe Verner, details the origins and continued growth of the society and shows the commitment of its members, all volunteers, to establishing a concrete and physical presence for Montgomery in Ontario. The Leaskdale manse, which the society has restored, and the Historic Church, which it maintains, provide a historical, educational site enabling visitors – actual and virtual – to envision the Ontario minister's wife and mother as an active community member and as the creative artist who retreated daily into the ground-floor front room to write.

In Lefebvre's introduction to the first volume of the *L.M. Montgomery Reader*, which assembles neglected writings by and about Montgomery from the publication of *Anne of Green Gables* to a few years beyond her death, he observes: "What I have found over the course of this research is that, even under the guise of absolute frankness, her journals and letters rarely tell the whole story."²⁵ Montgomery's life-writing and the life on which it is based, her fiction, both long and short, her poems, and her commentary and opinion pieces are all parts of the story, and their intricate interlaying itself, as Montgomery scholarship amply illustrates, creates another narrative. By directing the critical gaze on Montgomery's Ontario experience, the chapters in *L.M. Montgomery's Rainbow Valleys* begin to tell the Ontario story. They provide a new locus from which to approach Montgomery's work, finding in Ontario an inspirational centre that informs both her life and art. The volume's explorations build on, extend, and modify old stories and tell new ones. We anticipate, moreover, that these chapters will also provide the "spade work" (one of Montgomery's favourite terms) for future directions in Montgomery scholarship. The multiple shadows of the Ontario years associate her fiction with the dark strain evident in the work of other Canadian writers, suggesting that there may be a firmer place for her writings, one that until recently has largely eluded her, in the nation's literary canon. This dark strain, furthermore, associates her with a female literary tradition beyond nation. Montgomery's literary relationship to British and American writers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially women authors, has received notice but little analysis. Her ready engagements with Ontario's landscapes and urbanscapes are promising for reassessments of her work in the context of environmental studies that might newly illuminate her relationship to nature by repositioning her relations to a Romantic tradition and to those of her Canadian contemporaries known for their nature writing and paying due attention to her enduring interest in built environments. Ontario facilitated Montgomery's interests in dramatic performances, visual arts and media, and photography, both as observer and practitioner, which invite further inquiries into their alignment with her own literary art. Montgomery's scrapbooks, with the newspaper clippings and other artifacts

that capture the debates leading to the formation of the United Church in 1925, the financial vicissitudes of the 1920s and 1930s, and the calls for and responses to women suffrage, are still untapped resources. They also provide an intimate portrait of Montgomery and her Ontario neighbours agonizing over every defeat and celebrating every victory of the two world wars that frame this period. There are, indeed, many Montgomery stories left to tell.

Ontario recognized Montgomery's accomplishments from the outset. When she arrived in Leaskdale, the *Uxbridge Journal* showed its awareness that the minister's new wife was also the "famous 'L.M. Montgomery,'" describing Mrs Macdonald as both "gifted and charming."²⁶ The Ontario appreciation never waned even as it shared the "beloved writer," as the *Aurora Era* deems her in 1940, with the wider reading world.²⁷ On Friday, 25 April 1942, the *Globe and Mail's* obituary on Montgomery notes that many of her "more than a score of books ... have been translated into Polish, French, Swedish, Dutch and Spanish. Many have been published in Braille." It lists her many "honors": "She was made an officer of the Order of the British Empire in 1935 and became a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and a member of the Artistes' Institute of France, the Canadian Authors Association and the Canadian Women's Press Club."²⁸ The L.M. Montgomery who made her final journey back to Cavendish for burial and memorialization in 1942 was a very different writer and woman from the one who had left there in 1911. This volume's chapters, in exploring these intervening years in Ontario, aim for an increased understanding of that difference.

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Prologue



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