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**Creator:**

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**Description:** This Booklet was handed out at the unveiling of the Kate Aitken Memorial Plaque in Community Park, Beeton. The Booklet highlights the major events in Aitken's life, including sections entitled Never A Day so Bright, In the Classroom, Wife and Mother, The Farm at Beeton, Of Cooking Schools and Cookbooks, And Now Here's 'Mrs. A.' and Sunnybank Acres, Streetsville. The Booklet finishes with a programme for the ceremony held in the park.

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VF: Beeton - History -  
Aitken, Kate

# KATE SCOTT AITKEN MEMORIAL DAY

Beeton, Ontario  
June 3, 1973



*Kate Scott Aitken*  
*April 6, 1891 — December 11, 1971*

# KATE SCOTT AITKEN

April 6, 1891 — December 11, 1971

## *Never A Day So Bright*

Kate Scott Aitken was born in the village of Beeton, in Simcoe County, daughter of Robert Scott, general merchant, and Anne Scott. In her novel, *Never A Day So Bright*, she recounts her memories of a lighthearted childhood in a small Ontario town at the turn of the century — a town which bred stout hearts and generous minds. Kate always returned to her hometown folk and to-day is buried in the Union Cemetery at Beeton.

## *In the Classroom*

At age fourteen, Kate began the teaching career which she was to follow until her marriage. She took her training at the nearest teacher-training school, in Bradford, twelve miles from Beeton, and after three months of training, started teaching in a small country school in Adjala Township nearby for \$32.50 a month. After a more advanced teacher-training course, the spirit of adventure took Kate west where she learned to ride, to shoot, and to dance till dawn at the square dances on neighbouring ranches. The death of her father brought her back to Beeton and to her first business experience when she and her mother took over the management of the family store. Two years later, the family moved to Toronto, and in 1914, Kate left the classroom to marry her childhood Beeton sweetheart, Henry Mundell Aitken.

## *Wife and Mother*

Her husband's work took Kate to Virginia, Minnesota, but within a year the young couple returned to Beeton, Henry to help manage the family mill and Kate to bring into the world her two daughters, Anne and Mary. Then a dozen White Wyandotte pullets, a miniature poultry flock, led to dreams of a poultry farm; a twenty-six acre plot of ground was purchased just across the road from the family mill and Sunnybank Farm came into being.

## *The Farm at Beeton*

Ten years passed, spent in building up and equipping the farm until the poultry flock was large enough to apply for official government inspection. The poultry farm diversified into an orchard of young apple trees, crops of early potatoes, and small fruits and vegetables. The bountiful harvests of the latter led to a home-canning venture and before long the tiny farm was supplying weekend baskets to a Toronto specialty shop. Jersey cows, beagle hounds, Nellie the goat, and a litter of pigs added to the joyous industry of the family. Community and church were an important part of life, too. Kate helped to organize a Junior Choir in the Presbyterian church and was active in the formation of the Beeton Women's Institute, of which she became the first president. Because of the experimental work Kate had done on the farm, and because she was one of the few women doing such work, the Departments of Agriculture, both provincial and federal, employed her to give lectures, ranging all the way from high-production hens and dairy cows to canning and lunch boxes. The world egg-laying record of two White Wyandotte hens, A304 and A371, took Kate into the royal circle at the International Poultry Congress, held in Ottawa and attended by Britain's two young princes, the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Kent. There followed Kate's first overseas mission in charge of a Canadian Craft Exhibit at an Empire craft show in London, England. On this occasion, through the thoughtfulness of the Women's Institutes of Canada, Kate was presented to the Duke and Duchess of York, later King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. One of the handicraft exhibits was a delphinium-blue bedspread, made in Quebec from flax that had been grown and spun on a family homestead. The dyes came from the forest, and the white candlewick pattern was so carefully done that it was reversible. An invitation to tea, the presentation of the spread to the Duchess of York, and a tiny visitor at the tea table, the eighteen-month old princess whom the world came to know as Queen Elizabeth II, made the occasion a memorable one.

A writing assignment for a farm journal financed further travels at this time to Scotland, Ireland, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, and France. And in the following year a government assignment took Kate back to Europe, this time to Italy to an interview with Mussolini, then dictator of Italy — a long way from the farm at Beeton.

After six years of government assignments, Kate resigned and for five happy years the family of four worked as a team. Then the depression, which altered so many lives, led to Kate's taking time off from the farm for a series of cooking schools in Montreal and to the beginning of new ventures.



## *Of Cooking Schools and Cookbooks*

The series of cooking schools in Montreal extended to another series in the Maritime provinces and to still another series at the Chicago World's Fair. Then came the cooking schools at the Canadian National Exhibition, in the Electrical Building; and as a result of the enthusiastic crowds at these schools, the Directors of the Exhibition decided that the entire women's programme should be vastly extended, to create interest and to build up attendance. Kate was asked to head the Women's Division for the Exhibition — fashions, food, special displays, school art, day-care centre, home furnishing, and handicrafts. Assigned to Kate were special women guests, Princess Juliana, Mrs. Franklin Roosevelt, and Lady Mountbatten. Soon the Women's Building was not large enough to house all the women's activities, and space was laid aside in other buildings. The place of women at the Canadian National Exhibition became assured.

### *And Now Here's "Mrs. A."*

Three daily broadcasts, five days a week, thirty-nine weeks of the year! And Mrs. A.'s break into radio came almost entirely by accident. The woman commentator at a local radio station met with an accident on the way to the studio and broke her leg. To fill the gap, the station manager rushed down to the theatre where Mrs. A. was doing a cooking school and cajoled her into doing the broadcast. A loud speaker was installed in the theatre for the audience, and the cake, which Mrs. A. had been mixing for her theatre audience, was finished on the air. This unrehearsed broadcast was done live from the stage of the theatre. The sponsors of the cooking school were impressed by the response to Mrs. A.'s broadcasts, and by the following week Mrs. A. was launched on a radio career that was to take her into the homes of Canada. Toronto and Montreal had their own local "Mrs. A." broadcasts, but the morning trans-Canada network broadcast was heard from the fishing coves of Newfoundland to the coast of British Columbia and from the Northwest Territories to the United States.

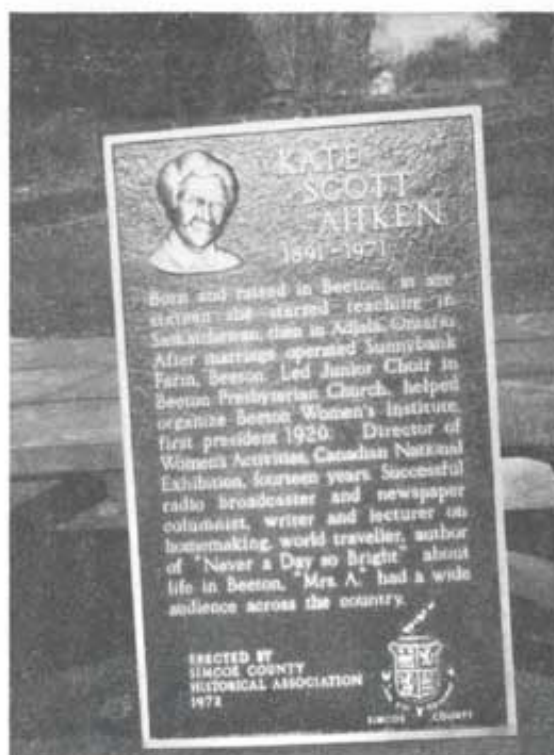
Remote broadcasts were done from every conceivable spot and under every conceivable set of circumstances — on the waterfront following a big swim, in theatres, at annual dinners, in supermarkets, at airports, and at apple festivals. The broadcasts were not produced by sitting behind a desk. Mrs. A. travelled not only from Cornerbrook to Kitimat in Canada, but several times around the world, reporting on exciting events and trouble spots and colourful ceremonies — Hitler's speech from the Chancellery,

Roosevelt in Washington, the wedding of Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh, the coronation of Queen Elizabeth, the Royal Tour, San Francisco World's Fair, a clambake in Trinidad, Holy Year in Rome, Clement Atlee in Constitution Hall, Cyprus in the Turkish-Cypriot crisis, the Pan-Asiatic Conference, the Hungarian border as refugees from the October revolution sought to elude Russian guards. And when television became a potent advertising medium, Mrs. A's sponsors asked her to take on both radio and TV. Mrs. A. took the new medium in her stride.

Mrs. A. wrote newspaper columns and books too — largely in response to the needs of her many listeners: books about cooking, etiquette, glamour, travel, making a living, and finally the book which recalled the nostalgic past of every Canadian, *Never a Day So Bright*.

### *Sunnybank Acres, Streetsville*

In 1958, Mrs. A. retired from the limelight into a life of quiet service to her fellow men as she turned her energies to work for the United Nations and for UNICEF, to an active part in the Women's Auxiliary of South Peel Hospital and on the Board of Directors for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. She remained, as always, a source of inspiration to her friends and indeed to all who sought to forward the welfare of other human beings. Her life, marked equally by her gaiety, her courage, and her dedication, ended quietly on the evening of December 11, 1971.



# KATE SCOTT AITKEN MEMORIAL DAY

June 3, 1973

Community Park — Beeton, Ontario

CHAIRMAN — DR. S. R. McKELVEY

O CANADA

Welcome to Beeton . . . . . Reeve S. R. McKelvey  
Welcome to Simcoe County . . . . . Warden James Wales  
Simcoe County Historical Association . . . . . Mr. David Phillips,  
Chairman of the Board  
Simcoe County Women's Institute . . . . . Mrs. Gordon Mallion  
South Simcoe Women's Institute . . . . . Mrs. W. Trotter  
Beeton Women's Institute . . . . . Mrs. Earl Stewart  
Arthur E. Evans, M.L.A., Centre Simcoe  
Rev. A. W. Downer, M.L.A., Dufferin-Simcoe  
"Kate Scott Aitken, The citizen" . . . . . Hon. W. E. Rowe  
Unveiling of memorial plaque by daughters . . . . . Mrs. Anne Thompson  
Mrs. Mary Hortop  
Dedication of plaque by Rev. Basil P. Das, Presbyterian Church, Beeton  
Lunch in Memorial Hall, by Beeton Women's Institute

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN

All Welcome

2.00 P.M. SUNDAY JUNE 3, 1973  
DO HOPE YOU CAN COME