

Title: Old friends flock to see plaque unveiled in Beeton. Page 1/2

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Old friends flock to see plaque unveiled in Beeton

Kate Scott was born in Beeton in 1891 and Kate Scott Aitken was buried in Beeton in 1971. The story of those intervening years is a story of a remarkable career—a whole series of careers.

Throughout those busy years she kept in touch with Beeton, with old friends, old schoolmates and so it was perhaps, that last Sunday, Kate Scott Aitken Memorial Day resembled an old boys' and girls' reunion as an estimated 1,000

people gathered in Beeton Park to see a plaque unveiled in her memory.

As the leaflet prepared by the Memorial Day committee recalls, Kate Scott began teaching in Adjala Township (for \$32.50 a month) when she was 14 years old. "After a more advanced teacher-training course, the spirit of adventure took her west where she learned to ride, to shoot and to dance till dawn." The death of her father brought her back to Beeton and

she and her mother managed the family store (which she was to recall so vividly in her book, *Never a Day So Bright*). Two years later they moved to Toronto and in 1914 Kate married Henry Mundell Aitken.

A year later the young couple returned to Beeton and their daughters (Anne and Mary) were born there. A dozen White Wyandotte pullets—the Aitkens' had bought 26 acres across from the Aitken flour mill—might be said to have been the start-

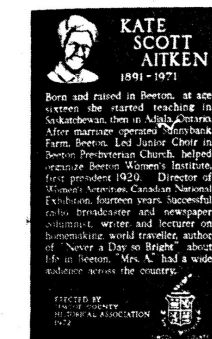
ing point for all that was to follow.

Mrs. Aitken was active in the formation of the Beeton Women's Institute and was its first president. It was fitting, therefore, that three of the speakers at Sunday's ceremony were Institute officers: Mrs. Gordon Mallion (president, Simcoe County W.I.), Mrs. W. Trotter (president, South Simcoe W.I.) and Mrs. Earl Stewart (president, Beeton W.I.). And that, when the Simcoe County

Historical Association proposed last year to erect a plaque in Mrs. Aitken's memory, the Beeton Women's Institute actively supported the project.

"She made a great contribution to this area, to the Province, to the whole of Canada," said the Rev. A. W. Downer on Sunday. "Wherever she went her particular gift was to describe it for us so that it just lived." Perhaps Mrs. Aitken—"And now here's Mrs. A"—will be best remembered for her radio broadcasts and interviews with noted figures across Canada and throughout the world for she covered so many exciting events—Hitler's speech from the Chancellery—the wedding of Princess Elizabeth—the coronation of Queen Elizabeth. (Another important undertaking was heading the Women's Division at the C.N.E.)

"For well over 50 years I watched, with keen interest and increasing admiration, the lively activities of Kate Aitken," the Hon. Earl Rowe told Sunday's audience. "She was un-



AITKEN PLAQUE

The bronze plaque commemorating Kate Scott Aitken stands in Beeton Park near a similar plaque in honour of David Alison Jones of bee-keeping fame.

(Alliston Herald Photo)

ique: she had abounding energy, boundless imagination and the

will to win. She did not have time to talk about Women's Lib, she took it for granted. She was not large in build but she was a bundle of dynamite. She made her own opportunities, her own success."

Mrs. Aitken's daughters, Anne Thompson and Mary Hortop, were to unveil the plaque but before doing so, Anne spoke briefly, saying, "My sister and I would like to thank you all for the loving tribute being paid to mother here today... Mary and I always do things together and she promised she would finish this speech for me." Mary did.

In closing the platform ceremonies, Dr. S. R. McKelvey, reeve of Beeton and chairman of the Memorial Day committee, invited all to the Community Hall where tea was being served and where about 150 pictures (brought by "the Aitken girls") were on display, showing some of the highlights of Mrs. Aitken's life. They made a fascinating record of a famous Beetonian.



KATE SCOTT AITKEN: APRIL 6, 1891 - DECEMBER 11, 1971

Before its dedication on Sunday afternoon by the Rev. Basil Das, of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Anne Thompson and Mary Hortop unveil the plaque erected in memory of their mother by the Simcoe County Historical Association.

Courtesy of Simcoe County Archives