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a v.i.p and me

(very interesting person)

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PEEL BIOGRAPHY

BELLEGHAM, MILDRED

By KATHLEEN A. HICKS
MILDRED BELLEGHAM:

Teacher in South Peel — 42 years

Author: A Letter From Home — Column

Member of Mississauga Historical Society

ME: I know your family has quite an interesting history. How far back does your family go in this country?

MRS. BELLEGHAM: My mother's great grandparents, the Van Everys (originally from Holland), came to Canada from the States in 1782. Great Great Grandfather Goldthorpe (originally from England) came up from Maryland to Etobicoke as a lad of eleven in 1797 with Colonel Smith, who was one of Butler's rangers; while the Graftons came from Carolina in 1810. And then on my father's side, my Grandfather Belford came from Ireland as a lad of 17 to Port Credit in 1869. He loved Port Credit. After he came to the Peel County area, he never wanted to go back to Ireland.

ME: When you were growing up, you lived on Centre Road (now Hwy. 10) and First Line (Cawthra Road). What schools did you attend?

MRS. BELLEGHAM: I went to the original Cooksville Public School when there were only two rooms. My father and mother had also attended Cooksville School. Then I went to Streetsville High School and Etobicoke Collegiate to complete my education.

ME: When did you realize that you wanted to be a teacher?

MRS. BELLEGHAM: When I was a little girl — I either wanted to be a teacher or a nurse. I wanted to be both, and I could never really make up my mind. So I thought, well, if I

were a teacher, I could still be a nurse. I started to teach first class — we didn't call them grades in those days — in Cooksville School in September 1930.

ME: You have six children. Did any of your children follow in your footsteps of the teaching profession?

MRS. B: One — our eldest son is a teacher. He enjoys it very much. He is a principal of a large school — 24 rooms, I believe — in Merlin, Ontario.

ME: What grades have you taught and in what areas of South Peel?

MRS. B: I've taught all grades up to eight, and also special class. In the '40s, I supplied in Cooksville, Queen Elizabeth, Port Credit, Clarkson, Burnhamthorpe, Erindale and Streetsville. Then when I had my youngest child, I vowed I would stay home and enjoy her to the fullest. But when I was asked to take a class in Cooksville in 1952, because they couldn't get a teacher, I said I would teach temporarily — and here I am still teaching. I wanted the experience of teaching all grades, so I taught in Erin in 1960-61. It was a one room school (built in 1864) just outside Erin on Hwy. No. 24. I drove 31 miles to school every day, and I had just got my driver's licence in the summer of '60. This school presented a challenge, but it was absolutely fascinating. Each morning the boys brought the water in from an old pump in the yard, and carried out the garter snakes from the girls' washroom, which was in the basement of the school. I really enjoyed teaching there; but the distance that I had to travel was the drawback. After Erin, I said this is it. I'm not going to teach anymore. Then I was asked to take a kindergarten class in St. James Separate School in Port Credit. The teacher had

taken ill, and I wasn't doing anything then. So, I took the class until Christmas. They didn't get a teacher, and in June they asked me to sign a contract. That's eleven years ago — I'm still teaching for them. I've loved every minute of every day that I've been with them. Incidentally, my kindergarten class won a trophy at the Peel Festival. We got 84 points to take the cup.

ME: What is probably the funniest incident that took place at one of your schools?

MRS. B: I think probably this is the most humorous I can think of right now. This happened back in the '30s. Ellan McDonald had brought a little mechanical mouse to school and it looked so real. After we had enjoyed it in the classroom, just for a little joke, I took it into the staff room and put it behind Rhea Green's rubbers, and promptly forgot about it. But at noon, I was greatly amused when I saw Bert Harper in the staff room with a yard stick, no less; and just as I walked in, he came bang — down on the mouse with the stick. He was sure he had killed it. Then Rhea discovered it was a toy mouse, and of course, she looked at me, and said, There's just no one else who would do a thing like that. (By the time she finished this story, we were both laughing; and then she told me this shorter one, which I just had to put in.) I have many amusing stories. I was teaching the story of Adam and Eve and the forbidden fruit. One of the questions was, Who told Eve to eat the forbidden fruit? And one little girl piped up, The government?

ME: Do you have any former pupils who are prominent today?

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