

THE NEW MISSISSAUGANS

When tragedy struck,

The frame house on Indian Trail stands back fifty feet or so from the road and is shielded in front by a tall hedge. It seemed to me a bit on the dowdy side when I called and in need of paint, but this was March and no house has a spanking look in March, especially when it is set among bare black trees and bare bushes. The windows, though, with looped white curtains and vases of flowers behind them, indicated a cheerful presence within.

When Helen Smith greeted me at the door, all smiles, there was no doubt about the cheerful presence. And this set me wondering, for living alone in a big house is not everybody's dish. I wondered what antidote for loneliness Mrs. Smith had discovered, for I knew that Major Kenneth Smith, her husband, had died shortly after they bought this house in Mississauga twenty years ago.

The antidote, I discovered, was art — painting. This has been her answer to loneliness as well as her vocation. Since her husband's death she has become famous for her paintings of the Mississauga scene.

It is difficult to tell Helen Smith's story without mentioning her husband, for he set an example in determination and fortitude which it would be hard to match. He lost a leg when he was a youngster, yet despite this he served in the army during the first world war and rose to the rank of Major in World War II.

PEEL COUNTY - BIOGRAPHY

(SMITH)

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she fought on alone

A PROUD MAN

"Don't make too much of it," Helen Smith begged. "He was a proud man."

She told me the story briefly.

"He was in England with his family at the outbreak of the first world war," she said. "He was only seventeen and too young for the service, but in spite of this and in spite of his artificial leg he kept trying to enlist — and failing, of course."

"However, he was so determined that he finally persuaded a relative with some influence in government circles to intercede for him and he was accepted into the army as a transport driver, riding the mules that drew the caissons and wagons."

Helen Smith was one of five girls, daughters of

John A. Browne, a well known resident of High Park and a keen amateur yachtsman. He was at one time commodore of the Queen City Yacht Club and later he helped found the National Yacht Club.

"Friends used to commiserate with him because he had no son to join him in sailing, but we girls made up for it. We had a summer home on Toronto island and we were on the water all the time. We used to sail to Port Credit and Oakville, and I think it was on these trips that I came to love the Mississauga country.

"Sailing and boating became a passion with me and it was one my husband shared. My happiest memories are of our cruises together."

THE NEW HOME

Mrs. Smith met her husband in Toronto after the first war, and following their marriage, they moved to Montreal. Later her husband was appointed sales promotion manager of the Ford Motor Company in Walkerville, and in this position he travelled extensively throughout Canada, frequently accompanied by his wife. During his service with the Ford Company Ken Smith visited

By ARTHUR LOWE



Australia where he helped to establish a subsidiary plant.

When the second world war came Kenneth Smith once again offered his services to the government. He was accepted by the army and made commanding officer of the Driver's Maintenance School at Woodstock with the rank of major.

"We were there for four years," Helen said, "and it was delightful — every minute of it. I had never lived in a small town before and it completely spoiled me for city life. It was the main reason why we located in Toronto Township when the war was over.

"For business reasons

we had been staying in Toronto. One day we were shown this house and it attracted us immediately — the beautiful country, the nearness of the lake; the house, with an orchard round it and almost enveloped by enormous elms. Everything was perfect except perhaps the house itself which needed fixing up and remodelling.

"We moved out here and Ken was enthusiastic; he was going to begin remodelling right away . . ."

As usual that summer they went north for a boating holiday. While

out one day on the Severn river with Helen, Kenneth had an attack of thrombosis and died almost immediately. He was never to remodel their new home.

"At first I didn't think I could take it in the house all by myself," Helen said. "We were so close, we had done everything together, and I was lonely — oh so lonely. And money was a problem too; there was no chance of doing the things we had planned — but I just couldn't give up, or give the house up."

She had dabbled in painting, but not seriously, I gathered. Then one day, in the midst of her despair, she was standing outside the house when she felt overwhelmed by the beauty about her. The loveliness of it.

"I knew I had to put it

on canvas," she said.

She went out and bought an easel and paints. Later on she joined the Humber Valley Art Club and came under the influence of Adrian Dingle. ^{video}

Helen Smith's paintings, mostly of the Mississauga country, have been widely exhibited and she has found a satisfactory demand for her work. Recently she had a show at the Newport Hotel where some sixty of her paintings were on display. Last year she had a similar showing at the Four Winds in Oakville and at the Willistead Galleries in Windsor. She also exhibits at outdoor art shows including Carling's Fall Festival of the Arts.

She is a Mississaugan of whom Mississauga should be proud.