

Ottawa women make history

By Jeannine Ouellette

The month of October is Women's History Month in Canada. Do you know the answer to these questions about women with Ottawa connections?

1. Did you know that the City of Ottawa has declared Nov. 28 to be Dr. Lotta Day in Ottawa? What was her accomplishment?
2. How many women have sat as Supreme Court judges in Ottawa since 1875? Who is the current Chief Justice of the Supreme Court? She is the first woman to ever hold this position.
3. Since the Order of Canada has first been awarded in 1967, how many women recipients have an Ottawa connection (i.e., were born in Ottawa or lived in Ottawa at the time of their award)?
4. Young girls did not always have access to formal schooling in Ottawa. What is the name of the woman who founded the very first school for girls in Ottawa in 1915? This school is still in existence today.
5. What was the name of the woman who was born in the House of Parliament Speaker's Chambers in Ottawa in 1876? She went on to become one of the most sought after dramatic



actresses of the early 1900s, and even had her own Shakespearean touring company.

These are a few of the fascinating women I have learned about while doing research for my blog entitled Women in Ottawa: Mentors and Milestones. I became interested in women as makers of history in 2005 while I was hosting a program on Rogers TV which chronicled 150 years of Bytown and Ottawa history. I was familiar with a few famous Ottawa women such as Élizabéth Bruyère, Charlotte Whitton and Lady Aberdeen, but soon ran out of women to showcase on the program *D'hier à aujourd'hui*. I met with Michel Prévost, chief archivist at the University of Ottawa, who provided a list of names, yet indicated to me that the information on women's contribution to Ottawa's history deserved



more attention. He encouraged me to document my findings. In 2008, the information took shape as a blog, and my incentive for this research deepened even more once I began corresponding with Dawn Monroe, a retired reference librarian who spent part of her career at the Library of the National Archives in Ottawa. Dawn is the author and creator of the Famous Canadian Women website. You can visit her at www.famouscanadianwomen.com.

By virtue of its historical role as the capital of Canada, Ottawa has been a land of opportunity for many "female firsts" and other exceptional contributions from Canadian women. My blog profiles women who were born in Ottawa, or moved to Ottawa at some point in their lives either to work or to study. They all connect in some way to Ottawa's history

Answers:

1. Lotta Hitschmanova, a great humanitarian who founded USC Canada (Unitarian Service Committee) in 1945 in Ottawa. She dedicated her life to helping people in far-off lands, mobilizing Canadians from coast to coast, and putting Ottawa on the map as a centre of Canadian concern for the rest of the world.
2. Since 1867, a total of seven women sat on the Supreme Court of Canada in Ottawa including current Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin, the first woman to ever hold that position.
3. There were 470 awards given to residents of the former Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton (now Ottawa) of which 113 are women. Each one of these women is presented on the blog.
4. Theodora A. Philpot founded

the Rockcliffe Preparatory School in Ottawa which later became Elmwood School. It is an all-girls International Baccalaureate World School providing schooling to 400 students.

5. Margaret Anglin. She is the daughter of Canadian politician Timothy Warren Anglin who was Speaker of the House of Parliament at the time of her birth in 1876.

- 1 **Lotta Hitschmanova** – Original art work by Katherine Allen. Reprinted with permission from Dawn Monroe, www.famouscanadianwomen.com
- 2 **Beverley McLachlin** – Original art work by Katherine Allen. Reprinted with permission from Dawn Monroe, www.famouscanadianwomen.com

or institutions, to our country's development or to Canada's place on the world stage. Many of them have reached historical milestones; all are women of vision and influence — mentors — who leave a trail of light that captures our imagination.

If you know of a woman who has an Ottawa connection and

could be included in the "mentors and milestones" blog, email me at jeannine@triyana.ca.

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