

Beryl on the Margins: A Memoir of Teaching “Under Disadvantages”

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ABSTRACT

Beryl Curtis (1891–1991) taught elementary schools in marginal mining, milling, and cross-roads agricultural settlements in eastern Ontario, Canada, from 1911 to 1927. In this memoir, I situate her career within the dramatic changes that swept through the occupation of teaching in the first three decades of twentieth-century Ontario. A childhood illness cost Beryl most of her hearing, but she succeeded as a rural teacher, earning the active support and respect of her main school inspector. She excelled in print culture and had a reputation as an “excellent disciplinarian.” She attempted to manage her hearing difficulties by learning to read lips, and she tried to escape backwoods sections. But she was expelled from normal school and refused permanent teaching status. When attendance at a normal school or a college of education became a requirement for elementary school teaching in the later 1920s, Beryl was one of many hundreds of rural teachers policed out of the occupation. Her hearing difficulties became a disqualifying disability.

RÉSUMÉ

Beryl Curtis (1891–1991) a enseigné dans des écoles élémentaires établies dans des hameaux où les habitants vivaient soit de l'exploitation de mines, soit comme ouvriers travaillant dans des moulins ou encore dans des propriétés agricoles marginales de l'est ontarien, au Canada de 1911 à 1927. Ce mémoire situe sa carrière en lien avec des changements dramatiques qui ont bouleversé l'enseignement dans les premières décennies du 20^e siècle ontarien. Enfant, Beryl avait perdu une grande partie de son ouïe dû à la scarlatine; malgré tout, elle réussit par la suite à enseigner dans plusieurs zones scolaires rurales, et à gagner le soutien et le respect de l'inspecteur attiré aux écoles où elle enseignait.

Excellente en culture imprimée, elle avait aussi la réputation d'exercer une discipline exemplaire. Elle essaya de compenser ses problèmes d'audition en apprenant à lire sur les lèvres dans le but d'obtenir un poste régulier d'enseignante. Cependant, elle fût malheureusement forcée à quitter l'École normale ce qui lui enleva tout espoir d'obtenir un statut permanent. Enfin, quand l'Ontario imposa un règlement exigeant un diplôme provenant ou d'une École normale ou d'un Collège d'éducation pour obtenir un poste d'enseignante dans une école élémentaire, dans les années 1920s, Beryl fut l'une parmi plusieurs centaines d'enseignants ruraux à être forcés à abandonner l'enseignement. Ses problèmes d'ouïe devinrent alors un handicap insurmontable.

Beryl Curtis (1891–1991) taught elementary schools in marginal mining, milling, and crossroads agricultural settlements in eastern Ontario, Canada, from 1911 to 1927, despite a childhood illness that cost her most of her hearing.¹ In this memoir, I reconstruct her teaching career, situating it within the dramatic changes that swept through the occupation of teaching in the first three decades of twentieth-century Ontario. When Beryl started teaching, many rural teachers had not finished and some had not attended high school. By 1926, provincial normal schools were graduating about 2,600 teachers a year, for a teaching corps that numbered about 18,500. In that year, the minister of education reported that some 30 per cent of graduates with first class and 37 per cent with second class certificates were not teaching school.² Model schools, which offered a short course of training for lower-level entrants, were abolished in 1925, and the minister eliminated district, temporary, and third class certificates. The Special List, established in 1913, which gave inspectors flexibility in finding teachers for hard-to-staff rural schools, was discontinued in 1926. New entrants and those renewing thirds were required to attend a normal school or college of education. Despite her demonstrated competence, poor hearing excluded Beryl from attending normal school; she was among the hundreds of rural teachers who were abruptly policed out of the occupation.

Beryl was my father's half-sister. I am "writing up close" and can't call her "Curtis." I met frequently with her and her daughter over the course of the period between 1975 and 1989 and inherited most of her papers. She documented almost everything she did as a teacher and had a Brownie camera. We annotated many of her photographs, but we did not work through her collection of school papers. Thus, reconstructing her career after her death demanded both that I locate individual documents in the context of the whole collection and that I seek traces of her life and career in other media.³ She was an active correspondent who kept letters she received, although almost no copies of letters she sent. No diary has survived, but some events remained emotionally vivid for Beryl in her nineties.

Beryl's teaching career illustrates both the characteristic transience of rural Ontario teachers in the early twentieth century and the dogged persistence of a well-educated and intelligent woman intent on staying in the occupation, despite being barred from normal school. For disabilities studies, her career is interesting because her loss of hearing was not an issue either at Model School or for inspectors hunting for good rural teachers. She mastered print culture and spoke clearly. Contemporaries spoke of her "disadvantages," but the Department of Education claimed that difficulties in hearing would prevent her from being able to teach at all. Despite her demonstrated competence, her difficulties became a disqualification when she tried to escape transience. Her experience demonstrates the labile character of what scholars now study as "disability." I begin with Beryl's early life and schooling, trace her teaching trajectory, and conclude with some reflections on her management strategies.

Methodist Networks

Beryl Gertrude Curtis was born in the Methodist parsonage in Ulverton, Quebec, on

December 24, 1891, the fourth of five children of Cary Joyce McCuen (1861–1897) and Charles John Curtis (1850–1937). Her father was a Methodist “circuit rider” stationed in Quebec’s Eastern Townships and then in various places in eastern Ontario until his retirement at Athens in 1920. The Methodist circuit riders spent two, and later four, years at a “station”: so did Beryl as a child and young adult. Clergy and lay delegates convened regularly and shared information about congregations, parsonage accommodations, social conditions, and local schools, decided on pastoral assignments, and debated church doctrine.

Methodism shaped Beryl’s personal and professional life. The Ontario public school system was Christian and Methodist-friendly. All Beryl’s teaching posts were in villages with Methodist churches, and she typically taught Sunday School, led Bible classes, and organized floral displays. She was active in the church’s Epworth League, which encouraged “intelligent piety” in the young, and which sponsored games and musical entertainment. She supported the Methodist temperance campaign. It was through her father’s connections that she found some of her teaching jobs and Methodist networks shaped her life in Toronto in 1920–22 as she tried to learn to read lips. She found solace at key moments in devotional exercises.

Childhood and Schooling

Beryl’s world was doubly upended in 1897 when she was five-and-a-half years old. An attack of scarlet fever cost her the greatest part of her hearing and killed her mother.⁴ She and her siblings were shipped off to relatives until her father married her mother’s sister, Jemima Annetta (Mima), but she in turn died in 1903 when Beryl was eleven; the younger children were again dispersed. In 1905, her father married Sarah Jane (Jennie) Honeywell (1874–1962) at his station in Nepean. Despite such disruption and her hearing loss, Beryl passed her high school entrance exams at Ottawa in 1906 and then spent five years at Athens High School, near her father’s next station at Addison.

Beryl’s grades in 1910 and 1911 were uneven, and one comment described her performance as “Satisfactory work under disadvantages,” but sometimes she led the class in arithmetic, algebra, and literature, and she scored consistently above the class average in her other subjects.⁵ She matriculated in June 1911. Many of her cohort then attended Athens Summer Model School, but Beryl did not appear in the school’s final photograph. Her Junior School Matriculation Standing allowed her to sit the Normal School Entrance Examination, which she passed at the end of August 1911.

First School: Ellisville, Fall 1911

Now nineteen, Beryl was granted a temporary teaching certificate,⁶ good from the end of September to the end of December 1911 for School Section 13 in Rear of Leeds and Lansdowne Township, a crossroads settlement known as Ellisville. She was probably paid at the annual rate of \$300. Her father’s Seeley’s Bay circuit included the Methodist church closest to Ellisville at Olivet, and it was his congregationists who

hired Beryl. She boarded with a farm family during the week and could walk home on weekends to bathe and to do her washing. This marked the start of her peripatetic teaching life.

An Adventure in Flinton, Winter 1912

Beryl was not renewed at Ellisville. Instead, she travelled 130 kilometres northwest to Flinton, Ontario, located on the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) rail line, where a dam on the Skootamata River powered machine shops, lumber, and grist mills. On February 19, 1912, she was granted another temporary certificate to teach School Section 2 of Kaladar Township until June 29, 1912.



Figure 1. *Sadie Edmonson, Maude Cornell, and Beryl Curtis, near Flinton Falls, 1912.*
Courtesy of Bruce Curtis.

This dilapidated two-room school had sat vacant through January 1912. Beryl was authorized to take the junior room, and a contemporary named Maude Cornell had the senior room, with 120 students between them. Beryl probably got this job through her father's connection to Maude's father, Rev. J. C. Cornell of Sharbot Lake. Both Cornell *père* and Curtis *père* were members of the Montreal Methodist Conference. Maude had several years' teaching experience, and, if Beryl had not met her previously, she likely felt secure in going to work with another, more experienced preacher's kid.⁷ In a typical pattern, Beryl's certificate was issued, and her formal agreement with her trustees signed, well after she had started teaching. The trustees

signed on March 29, saying she had started January 31, and would be paid at the annual rate of \$325 until the end of June. These printed formal agreements contained a line saying that they would remain in force from year to year unless one of the parties gave notice to the contrary, but that line was crossed out on Beryl's early agreements. Beryl and Maude lingered in Flinton in the warm weather at the end of term, but the trustees didn't renew them for September 1912. Maude Cornell moved to the nearby one-room Arden school. Beryl went to her sister Mercie's Kilmaurs farm where there were two babies needing attention.

The Margins

However, at Flinton, Beryl had come to the attention of the North Frontenac, Lennox and Addington County inspector of public schools, M. R. Reid from Sharbot Lake, another Methodist.⁸ For the rest of her career, he would prove an active ally and facilitator, while in Beryl he found a resource who was willing to teach, often on short notice, in remote areas of his inspectorship.

These counties on the Canadian Shield were still on the margins of colonization, with a white population living from logging, lumbering, small-scale mining, and subsistence agriculture. Into the 1920s, Reid's inspectorial district contained a majority of teachers on district or temporary certificates, and for many schools he certified whomever he could find. The thirty-two teachers in the northern part of his district in 1911, for instance, included twenty-nine women, twenty-one of whom had certificates valid only for a year in a specific school section. Three had not attended high school. For 1919, ten years into his inspectorship, Reid noted that there were eighty-one teachers at work in the combined counties of North Frontenac, Lennox, and Addington, six men and seventy-five women. Three of the women had been to normal school and eleven teachers had limited third class certificates: the rest were on temporary or district certificates. While conditions were better in 1919 than they had been in 1909, many schools did not have a well or playground and most were still heated by an unshielded wood stove. Caretakers were rare. Some schools were closed in winter. After ten years as inspector, Reid had seen 564 teachers pass through his district, only 1 of whom had stayed for at least ten years and only a handful for five. He complained to the county council that he spent much of his time teaching teachers to teach, instead of inspecting schools. Those who succeeded at model school usually sought work outside his district where conditions were better. By 1919, Beryl would be one of the longest-serving, best qualified teachers, although she too tried to escape. By 1927, she would be one of the last remaining on a third class certificate.⁹

Terror at Plevna, 1912

It was likely due to Reid that Beryl got a last minute offer to teach in School Section 2, Clarendon Township, in the mill village of Plevna. She was at work by October 21, but her temporary certificate was dated November 19, 1912, and was valid until the

end of December.¹⁰ In her nineties, Beryl's memories of the start of this job remained vivid. It was the first time she'd been far away from home among strangers. It was thirty kilometres to Plevna by stagecoach from Clarendon train station. She arrived on a Saturday evening to get a room in the hotel, but it was hunting season, and the lounge and bar were full of rowdy men smoking and drinking whisky. She spent the night terrified in her room, but fortunately, Ida Card, married to trustee and township reeve J. F. Card, came to her rescue in the morning and took her in as a boarder. Beryl recounted that the only way she managed to stick it out through Christmas was that her father wrote her a letter of encouragement every day.

Yet she did well enough here to get another temporary certificate valid from January to June 1913. She then attended Sharbot Lake Model School from July 3 to August 8, passed her exams, and returned to her parents at Seeley's Bay for the remainder of the summer.¹¹ Success at model school meant she could stay at the Plevna school until June 1914, at a salary of \$40 a month for ten months, and Ida Card likely charged her \$20 a month in room and board. The school was in comparatively good shape in 1914 according to Inspector Reid, who made one of the few comments on Beryl's teaching that survive in the archive: "Errors in English missed by t[each]er. Have p[upil]s speak louder." It is significant that the issue was not with Beryl's difficulties in hearing, but with students' speech. That mild reproach to Beryl contrasts with Reid's assessments of many other teachers, who let students interrupt them, didn't have or didn't follow a timetable, neglected the course of study, closed their schools at noon, ignored some of the students, lacked power and enthusiasm or, in one case, let the boys smoke and keep their caps on in the schoolroom.¹²

Beryl taught Sunday School in the Plevna Methodist Church and received a warm thank you and the gift of a Bible from the Sunday School superintendent when she left the village.¹³ In 1914, she signed the Methodist Church's temperance pledge, and she was later involved in organizing signatures on temperance petitions.

Sharbot Lake Model School Again, 1914

Beryl again passed the summer model school exams at Sharbot Lake in 1914, which now entitled her to a limited third class teaching certificate valid for five years. Model school regulations stated that any candidate "whose physical condition unfits them for teaching" could be dismissed, but Beryl's hearing was clearly not an issue. Of the sixty-one students, almost all of them women, only seventeen were awarded limited thirds, an improvement over the temporary and district certificates in that their holders could teach in any county elementary school where no first, second, or professional third class teacher could be found.¹⁴

Despite the new certificate, Beryl did not teach again until the fall of 1915. She fell ill in the fall of 1914 and in November, if not before, she was in St. Vincent de Paul Hospital in Brockville, Ontario. She recovered at the family home in Newboro, Ontario, on the Rideau Canal, where her father and stepmother had three kids aged eight, six, and two. With the declaration of war in August, her twenty-one-year-old brother Leslie immediately enlisted and was soon shipped overseas.

Twenty-four-year-old Stanley followed suit in November 1915. Her brothers' letters provide details about Beryl's teaching life, and she spent a good part of her time during the war making care packages and doing patriotic work in and out of school.

Clear Lake School, 1915–1916

In fall 1915, Beryl got another school, at School Section 11, South Crosby, in the hamlet of Clear Lake, a short ride on the B&W Railroad from her parents in Newboro. The trustees offered her \$450 to teach from September 1, 1915, to June 29, 1916, or at the rate of \$425 if she didn't complete the year, perhaps skeptical of her abilities.

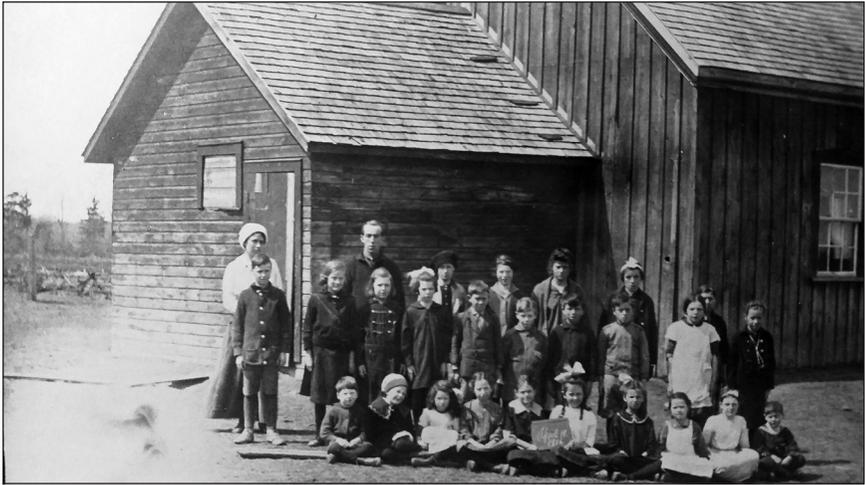


Figure 2. Beryl and students, School Section 11, South Crosby, April 19, 1916. Courtesy of Bruce Curtis.

Beryl kept a rare complaint from trustees about her work—not about her hearing. Trustee Ed Wright objected in March 1916 that she had harassed parents to buy the *Golden Rule Books*, even though an inspector had told him that these were library books (they weren't). If Beryl could not teach his daughter Irene without them, he wrote, “why I shall have to take her out. You have bothered her so much she does not want to go to school and is not learning anything.” Irene Wright indeed had been absent repeatedly and her grades were poor. Her father said he would provide other books if needed. And then there were the school windows: they were open too often according to trustee Stedman, who had three boys on the school roll, to the point where the children had to wear their outdoor clothing. And Beryl was burning too much firewood. It was fine to have the windows open at recess, but not otherwise. Beryl's model school lessons on hygiene had stressed the importance of schoolroom ventilation.¹⁵

The Normal School Episode, Fall 1916

Her experience at the Clear Lake school led Beryl, in the hope of something better,

to enroll at Peterborough Normal School in September 1916, rather to the surprise of her brothers overseas.¹⁶ Success in the course could have led to a permanent teaching certificate and escape from the margins. Her brothers congratulated her on her ambition, and Leslie joked, "When I come back we'll get a school together. You can be principal noise and I'll teach the young idea in the graceful art of—well—any thing you like."¹⁷ Stanley expressed surprise that Beryl was at the school, but urged her to "go after the big jobs... in some of these city schools" when she finished and, in any case, to "cut out these rural schools." He suggested she specialize in domestic science.¹⁸ Her brothers were agreeably surprised at Beryl's ambition in going to "Normal," given her hearing difficulties, but both knew how limiting it was for her to be stuck in isolated rural schools, given her education and intelligence.

Entrance requirements demanded that each normal school candidate present, among other things, "a certificate from a physician that he is physically able for the work of a teacher, and, especially, that he is free from serious pulmonary affliction and from seriously defective eyesight or hearing."¹⁹ Beryl presumably submitted one, but she was forced to withdraw from the normal school on October 3, via a letter from the deputy minister of education. It had been reported, he wrote, that her hearing was "quite defective" and a special medical examination "show[ed] that you cannot qualify as a teacher under section 4 (1) (vi) of the Normal School Syllabus." In fact, the letter continued, "this weakness would, of course, unfit you for successful work as a teacher in your own class room, and seems to be so serious in its nature that this Department does not at present feel warranted in encouraging you to continue your attendance at the Normal School."²⁰

Beryl left no written record of her reaction to this rude expulsion, although her brother Leslie suggested that she was stalwart.²¹ She certainly didn't accept that she couldn't teach, nor did Inspector Reid, who provided her with a list of school openings in his district.²² Yet her expulsion from the normal school would be the determining moment for her career.

North Augusta, 1916–1917

Despite the expulsion, the Education Department recognized Beryl's limited third class certificate and authorized her to teach in School Section 18, North Augusta Township, "until 22 December 1916." Two other teachers had abandoned this school before Beryl started on October 30. At term's end on her inspector's recommendation, she was renewed "until 29 June 1917."

This one-room brick school had seventeen students in a crossroads hamlet called South Branch, almost 300 kilometres east of the normal school. Beryl had been visiting in North Augusta in July 1916.²³ She did not keep a copy of her trustee agreements, but a later invitation to make up contribution room in the Teachers' Superannuation Fund showed that she made less than \$550 a year. She organized a student donation to a Belgian war relief fund, and two of her students sat their high school entrance exams after she offered supplementary reading instruction. Brother Leslie was thoroughly unimpressed: "You seem to have hit another of those places

where you might as well be buried [alive] and worse than that you've struck a place where no one seems to be able to live."²⁴

Wensley, 1917–1920

Beryl left the tiny South Branch school in fall of 1917 to return to M. A. Reid's North Frontenac/Lennox and Addington inspectoral district. The trustees in Union School Section 1 Denbigh and 6 Abinger and Ashley Townships, next door to Plevna, hired her to teach from September 1, 1917, until the end of June 1918 for \$500 (below the average for the county).²⁵ Again, the trustee agreement was signed long after she began work—on December 3. But this time she stayed in place until June 1920, quite an exception to the transience of most county teachers. Inspector Reid continued to recognize her Sharbot Lake certificate after it expired at the end of 1918 or 1919. Legislative supplements raised the average Frontenac female teacher's salary to \$812 by war's end, and Beryl eventually earned \$800 a year here.

The school was in the crossroads hamlet of Wensley, named after the leading local family. Beryl boarded with them and had five Wensley students in her classes. She was deeply involved in family life and when she left the village, the younger Wensley children continued to write to their "dear Teacher." The younger boys corresponded with her after they had followed their brother Lytton and sister Cordelia Wensley to the grain fields of Saskatchewan, and Weller Wensley, ten years Beryl's junior, did so long after he had left school. Beryl did not teach the eldest sister, Cordelia, but she too took up teaching after moving west and wrote affectionately to Beryl in 1922, encouraging her to come to Saskatchewan and "normal" to take advantage of high prairie salaries.²⁶

There was drama. Beryl was photographed beside the Wensley school in warm weather costume, but it burned, and she photographed the ruin. Rumour had it that a young man who was avoiding conscription by hiding out in the woods by day and sleeping in the schoolhouse by night had caused the fire. Archie Wensley reported that the school moved to the cheese factory, and Beryl carried on. A photograph sent much later from Saskatchewan by William Wensley suggested that an older school building was revived by winter 1918.²⁷

School Fairs

The provincial Department of Agriculture attempted to use the schools to increase food production as the war dragged on, and the federal census office tried to get teachers to take a census of agriculture. A February 1918 Department of Agriculture circular urged teachers to enlist their students as "Junior Soldiers of the Soil" in anticipation of a fall school fair.²⁸ Beryl organized this project, and the Wensley kids won prizes. She appears with her Wensley students in a photograph for the township-wide 1919 event.

Agricultural school fairs were held in the other places where Beryl taught, some involving her students dressing in costumes with maple leaf motifs, waving the Union Jack. As she was preparing the 1918 competition, Beryl learned that her brother



Figure 3. *Denbigh Fall Fair, September 1919. Beryl Curtis, centre rear. Courtesy of Bruce Curtis.*

Stanley had been killed in August near Cambrai in France. Family lore has it that she tacked the note “No School Today” on the schoolhouse door when she got the news.²⁹

The Wensley job ended in June 1920, and Beryl’s teaching certificate had expired. She did not teach again until September 1922. As her brother Leslie put it to their sister Mercie, Beryl was “pretty tired of the ‘back to native’ life up there,”³⁰ although she continued to visit people in both Wensley and Plevna later in the 1920s. For his part, Leslie attended Peterborough Normal School in 1921–22 and after graduation took the senior room at School Section 1, Bexley, in Coboconk, Ontario, and angled for Beryl to get the junior room.

Lip Reading in Toronto, 1920–1922

Before landing in Coboconk, Beryl lived in Toronto from summer 1920 to fall 1922 at 97 Russett Avenue. I don’t know how she earned a living. She was the beneficiary of Stanley’s \$500 life insurance policy, but she invested it. Possibly she worked at her Uncle Tom’s Curtis Press and Jewellery Co. at 404 Bloor St. W.³¹ Somehow, she was sufficiently well-heeled to have a Model T Ford Roadster. She was ill for some of this period, but more interesting is her connection to activists working with the deaf and hearing impaired. I speculate that she was trying to qualify as a teacher of the deaf, or as a kindergarten teacher, although Jason Ellis points out that the Toronto Board of Education did not hire hearing-impaired teachers.³²

It is difficult to reconstruct the network of people involved from her documents and the secondary literature is thin, but there was a Methodist connection again, likely to the evangelicals in the Berean Church and Toronto’s Evangelical Church of the Deaf.³³ Beryl kept a “carte de visite” for Mrs. J. H. Palin, who had Berean Church connections, as well as a book jacket advertisement for Edward B. Nitche’s (1919) standard manual, *Lip Reading Principles and Practice*. Palin and some other



Figure 4. "Me and the car I drive." Beryl and her 1930 Ford Model T Roadster. Courtesy of Bruce Curtis.

activists are mentioned in Beryl's correspondence with Minnie Faircloth, a Methodist hearing-impaired teacher of the deaf, and an organizer of the Toronto Lip Reading Club, formed in February 1921.³⁴

Faircloth's communications read to me as infantilizing, although Beryl never commented on them. In May 1922, Faircloth addressed Beryl as "My Dear Girl" and described her as "a brave scout": Beryl was thirty years old with a decade of teaching under her belt, hardly a girl. Here, Beryl's diminished hearing was described as a blessing, a standard evangelical trope, and Faircloth presented her duty as "to smile and make others happy." She continued: "My idea is that handicapped people, should be nicer in every possible way than others. If we are, we will be kept so busy, with all the nice things, we will not have time to think of any others. Is it not so my dear?"³⁵

Still, the club and churches could offer solidarity and friendship among those with hearing difficulties as well as practical instruction. Beryl had a copy of the club's constitution and by-Laws, although she probably did not pay \$2 to join, and in any case, without a teaching certificate, she couldn't get a job in a city school. Yet Faircloth confirmed that lip-reading helped Beryl's work: "A wave of thankfulness filled my heart that already lip-reading is beginning to be of some service to you." She sent Beryl a typescript of the Lip Reading Club's exercises for the period October 12 to November 16, 1922, urging her to practise.³⁶

Fired From Coboconk, Fall 1922

In an inversion of Leslie Curtis's jokey 1916 communication, Faircloth's letter shows that Beryl was teaching with him at School Section 1, Bexley, in Coboconk, Ontario.

She had the junior room, Leslie the senior room, and he probably arranged for her to get this job. Lip reading may have helped her to teach, and she seemed determined to get back into the occupation. She applied to be renewed at Coboconk, but her inspector, W. H. Stevens, made it clear in a snippy letter that she was finished at this school. He wrote that "the Circular I sent you makes it perfectly clear that a Third class certificate does not and will not qualify you to teach in the Junior Room at Coboconk."³⁷

Orillia Model School, December 1922

Beryl had already arranged to sit the fall 1922 teachers' examinations at the Orillia Model School. Her hearing was not an issue for these written exams. The school's principal wrote telling her to contact the department to get the syllabus, which consisted essentially of the teachers' manuals for the various elementary school subjects, and she needed an inspector's recommendation. Stevens from Coboconk provided her with a statement of her teaching experience. "Do not be afraid to [take] the examinations," wrote the Model School principal. "Your chief trouble will be to make arrangements to get the time to attend the exams." Indeed, the timetable involved full day sessions from Friday, December 15, to Friday, December 22. Beryl sat the written examinations in history, school management, science of education, composition and grammar, arithmetic, geography, and literature, and, on a scale of 75, scored 72 in history, 66 in school management, and 70 in the other subjects (A's and one A). At the end of December, she was awarded a new limited third class certificate valid for five years.³⁸

Despite her success, the numbers of teachers attending model schools and the numbers with third class certificates were plummeting across Ontario. Third class teachers were now required to attend a normal school for a year to acquire second class credentials, although the model schools still allowed a few candidates into the occupation. Beryl probably slipped back in because technically she was not renewing an existing certificate. Orillia examined only twenty students in 1922, compared to over sixty at Sharbot Lake in 1914. All the model schools would be closed in 1925. Across the system in 1922, about 1,100 teachers had thirds, down from 3,500 a decade and a half earlier.³⁹

Back to Plevna, 1923–1925

While her model school exams were still underway, on December 20, 1922, Beryl received an express letter from Js. F. Card of the Board of Trustees for School Section 2, Clarendon, in Plevna: "I got word from my III Class Teacher that She had taken another school so there is a chance for you to come to our school as I will except to your application III Class Certificate \$800.00 per annum. Mrs Card says she will Board you so if you come we will have to Kill a hen. We have got Turkeys Ducks & Chickens for Xmas. hoping to hear from you by return mail."⁴⁰

So Beryl returned to this school section that she had left in 1914, now with a

limited third class certificate, first approved only from January 3 to June 29, 1923, but then renewed until June 29, 1925, at the rate of \$80 a month during the school year, thanks to a Special Legislative Grant to rural schools. While she stayed in the junior room, the Plevna trustees were unable to retain senior room teachers. Five different people passed through the senior room while Beryl was at work, despite the \$1000 salary. Indeed, the recent normal school graduate Lorne Piercey lasted only from January 8 to April 17, 1924. Beryl remembered Piercey fondly and was photographed with him standing in her schoolroom.

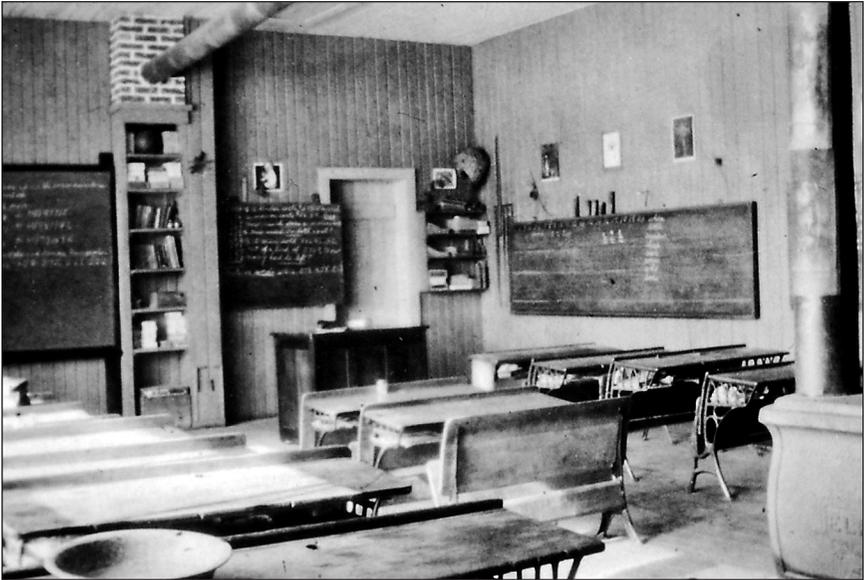


Figure 5. *Beryl's schoolroom, Plevna, 1924. Courtesy of Bruce Curtis.*

She kept many other pictures of the school and of her landlady. She recorded her students drilling in the schoolyard, and she photographed children gleefully sledding down school hill. She organized elaborate Christmas pageants and costume performances in addition to delivering the rest of the curriculum, and she taught Sunday School in the Methodist church across the lane from her school.⁴¹

Beryl also kept a few letters of parental complaint, which demonstrate her participation in the disciplinary project that was public schooling. One parent accused Beryl of discouraging her son by continually “throwing slanders at him” and criticizing his dirty clothes. She withdrew the boy. Another was offended by Beryl’s “keeping her daughter back” for irregular attendance and a lack of books, and a third (from a trustee) angrily rejected Beryl’s claim that his son had brought whisky to school. Beryl was often photographed with little boys, but not little girls, to whom she had taken a shine.⁴²

Permanent Status Refused, 1925

In May 1925, Beryl attempted to have her teaching certificate made permanent. She had done the obligatory refresher course at the “11th Annual Frontenac and Addington Teachers’ Institute” in October 1924, and perhaps contact with her fellow teachers underlined the increasing precarity of her position. Across the system, most working teachers had now attended a normal school or a college of education (13,481 out of 15,508) and had second class certificates or higher. The minister of education abolished the model schools in the face of a large surplus of normal school graduates. Frontenac County as a whole, whose 149 teachers had three firsts, seventy-nine seconds, sixty-one thirds, and six district certificates, lagged the provincial average, but thirds were vanishing. Beryl could not attend normal school.⁴³

She wrote to the minister of education in Toronto that she believed “Permanent Third Class Certificates are granted in some cases and wish to make application for same. By the end of June of the present year I shall have completed ten years of teaching. I have my Entrance to Normal and Junior Matriculation obtained at Athens High School, 1911, also Ltd. III class certificate obtained at Sharbot Lake Summer Model School, 1914, and renewed at Orillia, 1922.”⁴⁴ The deputy minister responded in less than a week with a refusal:

Dear Madam:—

I am directed by the Minister of Education to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of recent date, and in reply to state that applicants for Permanent Third Class certificates are required to submit evidence of at least twelve years successful teaching experience on a Professional Third Class certificate prior to June 1924. It does not appear from your letter that you are able to submit evidence of the required teaching experience.⁴⁵

It is unclear why Beryl left the Plevna job at the end of June 1925. Another teacher on a limited third was her replacement, so she was not bumped. Perhaps the trustee with whom she tussled was responsible. Inspector Reid continued to support her, suggesting she write to the trustees in School Section 12, Olden Township at Mountain Grove, and School Section 2 in Kennebec at Ardoch and to state that he recommended her. Each of these was a two-room school, with an opening in the junior room for \$800 a year.⁴⁶

Last School: Mountain Grove, 1925–1927

Beryl chose to write to Walter W. Barr, the chair of the trustee board in Mountain Grove on July 16 and got an answer in Barr’s shaky prose ten days later: “I would Say we expect from 25 to 30 Pupels in the Junior room and about Board Miss Penman has Boarded with a Mrs F cronk \$20.00 Per month I believe... we will try to arange that when you come.”⁴⁷ Mountain Grove was on the CP railway line, relatively close

to Beryl's father at Athens, and its Methodist Church, recently converted to a United Church, was in good repair (and remains so).

Beryl signed the Mountain Grove Teacher's Agreement on September 1, 1925, to run until June 29, 1926, at a salary of \$800. She ended up paying \$30 a month for board to Mrs. Cronk. A revised agreement was signed on December 28, 1925, this time offering Beryl the job until June 1926, at the rate of \$700 a year, rising to \$800 if the inspector got a supplementary grant for poor schools (he did not). Both Beryl and Christina Penman, who had the senior room, were active in the Epworth League.⁴⁸

At year's end, the school trustees had to advertise for candidates holding at least second class certificates. In late July 1926, Walter Barr wrote to Beryl, addressing her as "Dear Friend":

as we have to advertise for teachers the trustees thought it advisevel to send you a notice and rite you though they were well pleased with your work in fact they would like to get you back for enother year if it could be eragned... you will see the add in the Kingston wig.⁴⁹

Send in your aplication and we will do what we can do.

He included a formal note of dismissal, and the trustees sent her two warm thank-you notes.

Inspector Reid wrote to Beryl in June to promise to do all in his power to find her another school. He suggested that her brother might take the school at Wensley, and perhaps she would like to teach with him. Now only 646 of Ontario's 16,016 teachers had third class certificates. In his annual report for 1926, the minister of education noted the existence of a large surplus of teachers with firsts and seconds, which justified the closing of the model schools in 1925. He announced that "it would seem well to discontinue the issue of the Limited Third Class certificate at an early date..." For the year 1926, Olden and neighbouring Oso Townships employed thirty-eight teachers. Beryl was the only one teaching on a third: thirty-one had seconds and six had firsts.⁵⁰

As it turned out, Beryl got the Mountain Grove job for another year, from September 1, 1926, to June 29, 1927, but the trustee agreement was only formalized in December 1926 and the salary was reduced to \$650, well below the county average. Still, she joined the Ontario Educational Association for the year 1927-28, and Inspector Reid proposed that she be the local delegate to the annual meeting in Toronto in April 1927, although it's not clear that she attended.⁵¹ Once again, there is no indication that her hearing difficulties were an issue.

Beryl's contract expired at the end of June 1927. The Mountain Grove trustees and the representatives of the Methodist Church both sent her thank you notes and recommendations in late spring and early summer 1927. But a flurry of communications and documents suggest that she hoped to continue to teach. Her Orillia certificate should have been valid until December 1927. On June 25, Inspector Reid sent her the circular inviting teachers to prepare for the Jubilee Celebrations

of Confederation. Beryl got the printed pamphlet for the Mountain Grove Annual School Fair, scheduled for September 19, 1927. And a scribbled note from Walter Barr dated only “30” read:

Application accepted one month, pending department decision.
Hope permanent. come immediately. Reply

Done, 1927

Travel plans on the back of this note suggest it was from late summer 1927: the Mountain Grove trustees seem to have planned to renew Beryl permanently if the department would agree. But a letter from Inspector Reid dated September 27 made it clear that Beryl was finished. “I cannot understand why the Department could not have given you your due,” he wrote. “I could not have done less and often wished that I could have done more. Your work deserved it.”⁵² She got another recommendation from Reid on March 28, 1928:

To whom it may concern this certifies that Miss Beryl G. Curtis has taught some twelve years in this Inspectorate. I consider her an excellent disciplinarian and teacher. The parents as well as the children in her schools had the highest regard for her and her work and she was highly esteemed by all.⁵³

Options 1927–1932

Beryl had few options left to make a living, coming up to age thirty-six, if one discounts the occasional offers of marriage she'd had while teaching. She invested \$200 in a farm property her brother Leslie bought and seems to have planned to live on it with him and his wife and children, but one of her uncles advised strongly against the plan and suggested she marry.⁵⁴ Her aunt Emma Honeywell, who was working as a nurse in Moncton, New Brunswick, tried to recruit Beryl to be assistant to the superintendent of the Children's Aid Home, an orphanage. Beryl applied for this job and was offered it in May 1928, but the pay was \$45 a month, with two weeks' vacation: certainly live-in, with more work and less liberty than teaching school.⁵⁵ She may have tried this job: she had a schedule of train fares and routes among her papers, but if she went to Moncton, she did not stay long. Instead, she took up a third option: she kept house for her bachelor cousin Wesley McCuen, thirteen years her senior, on his market garden farm near Freulton and close to her McCuen aunts and uncles. They married at Athens on April 4, 1929, adopted an infant daughter in 1932, and had a largely congenial life together until Wes died in 1971. Beryl retired to a house in Freulton and lived rather longer than she wished in a nursing home, until 1991, in her 100th year.

One last piece of her teaching life remained to be dealt with when she married: her contributions to the Teachers' Superannuation Fund. Beryl had written to the superintendent of the fund about withdrawing her contributions and received a circular

outlining the conditions for doing so. She was told that anyone having taught for five years could withdraw all their contributions, but the circular counselled against it. To get the money, one had to accompany an application with an attestation that read, "I have definitely and permanently retired from the teaching profession and have no present intention of returning to the same. A copy of my resignation is attached hereto." Applicants were told that many women who retired were widowed and if they returned to teaching, they could not reinvest what they had withdrawn. As well, the superannuation fund was a wise investment that paid 4 per cent interest, compounded half-yearly.⁵⁶

Beryl waited to withdraw her funds until the Depression year of 1932. On February 25, she got a cheque for \$163.98.⁵⁷

Conclusion

Biographies of teachers like Beryl are extremely rare in the Canadian literature. Inspector M. R. Reid's detailed accounts of schools in his marginal district show very high levels of turnover among teachers and reveal that many were underqualified and did not last long in the occupation. Some schools changed teachers every semester, and some more often than that. Beryl's papers reveal a teacher who was stable, diligent, and well prepared, with detailed plans and timetables for instruction, carefully drawn up lessons, exercises, and tests, and who promoted a range of extracurricular activities. But her difficulty in hearing prevented her from moving away from marginal rural jobs. Her brother Clarence, fresh from Ottawa Normal School, claimed that there was chaos in her room whenever her back was turned, and normal school officials in 1916 thought she could not hear well enough to teach at all. But her inspector and most of her trustees disagreed and thought she was "an excellent disciplinarian." Barring an interview, a diary, or commentary from some observer, the strategies and tactics Beryl used to hear well enough to teach for as long and as well as she did remain obscure.

The once "new studies in literacy" might suggest a lead.⁵⁸ Here literacy is a distributed rather than an individual capacity and the approach asks not how many or how well individuals can read but rather how engagement with print culture takes place. Individuals and groups may delegate tasks of literacy to others. The parallel question for Beryl would be how she managed necessary auditory tasks given difficulty in hearing. She could read lips to some extent, and she spoke clearly. She mastered text, so perhaps if we were in her school room, we could hear her translate demands for hearing work into textual work. She could have used other tactics: demanding that students speak very loudly, as Inspector Reid urged in 1914, for instance, or using face-to-face instruction and reading lips with those she needed to hear. She might have delegated some hearing work to her senior students. Community residents did the work of listening to plays and pageants.

Nonetheless, the requirement that all teachers attend normal school and the wave of new entrants into the occupation—including Beryl's half-brothers Clarence and Murray—made it possible for the Department of Education to eliminate third class

certificates. Beryl could not attend normal school to upgrade her credentials, so her hearing difficulty became a disqualifying disability even on the margins of the occupation.

Notes

My thanks to Heather Wilson of the Lennox and Addington County Museum, Heather White (Ida Card's granddaughter), Michèle Martin, two anonymous reviewers, and the editorial team at *HSE/RHÉ*.

- 1 For a detailed account of one of Beryl's contemporaries and an overview of the literature on Ontario rural female teachers, see Joshua C. Blank, "Thrifty Trustees, Curriculum Clashes, and Gender Disparities: Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Barriers in Education in Rural Renfrew County," *Historical Studies in Education/Revue d'histoire de l'éducation* 33, no.1 (2021): 70–96.
- 2 *Report of the Minister of Education Province of Ontario for the Year 1926* (Toronto: King's Printer, 1927).
- 3 It is striking how many of Beryl's footprints were revealed by a diligent (obsessive) search through online sources, government documents, local history records and archives, and press sources, especially the *Daily British Whig*, online at Digital Kingston, (<https://www.digitalkingston.ca/>).
- 4 *Daily British Whig*, March 5, 1897. The entire family was seriously ill.
- 5 Curtis Family Papers (hereafter CFP), printed report card, Athens High School, Bi-Monthly Report, marginal note for September–October 1910.
- 6 Inspectors had the latitude to appoint someone to teach who hadn't attended model school in cases where no certified teacher was available, provided they be at least eighteen years of age. Younger people could be appointed with approval of the minister. See, for instance, "Instructions to Inspectors re Temporary, District and Third Class Certificates," in *Report of the Minister of Education of the Province of Ontario for the Year 1913* (Toronto: L. K. Cameron, 1914).
- 7 Maude's early teaching trajectory was similar to Beryl's. She followed her father's various postings, doing three years at Sydenham High School and a year at Kingston Collegiate Institute. She taught the elementary school in Harrowsmith in 1906–07; moved to a Pittsburgh Township school for 1907–08; and taught in School Section 3 in Zealand in the winter term of 1911. There is no mention in the sources of her teaching between 1908 and 1910, but it is likely that she did since she was on Inspector Reid's list of "Teachers available" for 1910. After her time in Flinton, she moved to the school in Arden, Ontario. All these schools were on her father's circuits. She accompanied her father on his move to Saskatchewan in 1914 and married in 1915. At least until 1930 she was sending Beryl photographs of herself and her children, which suggests that they had an earlier and deeper acquaintance than one of the five months in Flinton.
- 8 Queen's University Archives, list of graduates, BA Arts, 1894–96; MA, 1897; Marvin Rickman Reid (1868–1965), holder of a first class teaching certificate, "List of Provincial Certificates," *Report of the Minister of Education (Ontario) for the Year 1898* (Toronto: Warwick Bro's and Rutter, 1898).

- 9 County of Lennox and Addington, Sessional Papers, 1912, "Report of M. R. Reid, Inspector of Public Schools," at <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKewik4ZCkw4v8AhWGoHIEHcDwAjgQFnoECCIQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Flennoxandaddington.civicweb.net%2Fdocument%2F32429&usg=AOvVaw0vPZ6IXFXhawYm93RWe29O>. County of Lennox and Addington, Minutes, November 1920, "Report of M. R. Reid, P.S.I., Sharbot Lake, June 12th, 1920," at <https://lennoxandaddington.civicweb.net/filepro/documents/>.
- 10 CFP for the certificate; also, *Daily British Whig*, October 22, 1912: "School is progressing favorably under the able management of Miss Curtis of Seeley's Bay." In principle, she should have attended model school in summer 1912, but there is no trace of her having done so.
- 11 *Daily British Whig*, "Passed Examination at Summer Model School at Sharbot Lake. List of Teachers Who Will Be Authorized to Teach in the County of Frontenac," August 21, 1913.
- 12 Private Papers Collection of the Museum of Lennox and Addington, M. R. Reid's School Inspection Notes, 1914–1916, "Teaching. Clarendon & Miller," 23, for the quotation.
- 13 CFP for the original address, also reported at length, *Daily British Whig*, July 3, 1914.
- 14 Beryl kept a photograph of the 1913 model school session, but we see only her head. A second photograph, not dated but probably from summer 1914, shows her with three other student teachers. On the summer model schools, see L. J. Dupuis, "A History of Elementary Teacher Training in Ontario" (MA thesis, University of Ottawa, 1952), 75–76.
- 15 CFP, Ed. Wright to Miss Curtis, Singleton, March 22, 1916. A constant criticism by Inspector Reid in his district was that school windows were single hung and did not open from the top, as good ventilation dictated. In Figure Two, we see that the windows of the Clear Lake school are single hung from the bottom. In effect, the trustees provided Beryl with a substandard building and harassed her for her insistence that her students be furnished with the legally mandated *Golden Rule Books*.
- 16 Noted in the *Daily British Whig*, September 16, 1916.
- 17 CFP, Leslie to Beryl, July 22, 1916. As we see below, Leslie did organize a joint teaching project in 1922, but he was the "principal noise."
- 18 CFP, Stanley to Beryl, Union St., Peterboro, October 16, 1916. She had been expelled and was probably at North Augusta when his letter caught up with her.
- 19 "Syllabus and Regulations for the Normal Schools," Section 5 (c). *Report of the Minister of Education of the Province of Ontario for the Year 1913* (Toronto: L. K. Cameron, 1914). The citation of 4 (1) (vi) below is from a later report, identical in substance.
- 20 CFP, Deputy Minister of Education, Toronto, to Miss Beryl G. Curtis, Normal School, Peterborough, October 3, 1916.
- 21 CFP, Leslie to Beryl, North Augusta, November 14, 1916.
- 22 CFP, M. R. Reid, MA, Inspector of Public Schools, Sharbot Lake, to Beryl G. Curtis, December 5, 1916. Four possibles, each paying \$400 a year.
- 23 While teaching here, she boarded with a Kelsey family and there were Kelsey kin around Ellisville where Beryl boarded in fall 1911. That might be her connection to South Branch, although earlier her father had been stationed nearby. For a list of teachers and a photograph of the school, Township of Augusta, "School Section no. 18. South Branch. Inspected: September 27, 1955. By M. Weeks & G. Dowker," <https://augustalibrary.com/wp-content/uploads/South-Branch-School.pdf>.

- 24 CFP, Leslie to Beryl, North Augusta, December 17, 1916.
- 25 *Daily British Whig*, January 10, 1917. Many of the figures who appear in Beryl's papers can be found in the various editions of *Vernon's Farmers and Business Directory for the Counties of Frontenac, Grenville, Hastings, Leeds, Lennox and Addington and Prince Edward* (Hamilton: Henry Vernon and Sons, Publishers) and of the *Province of Ontario Gazetteer and Directory 1910–11* (Ingersoll, ON: Union Publishing Company of Ingersoll, 1910), <https://archive.org/details/provinceofontar191011unio/mode/1up?view=theater&q=Toronto>, and subsequent years. J. F. Card from Plevna and P. J. Wensley were both school trustees, township councillors, and Wensley succeeded Card as reeve. Wensley could easily have heard about Beryl from Card and/or from Reid, who kept a list of available teachers.
- 26 CFP, Cordis Hamilton, Riverhurst, Saskatchewan, to Miss Beryl G. Curtis, (Fruitland scored out) Coboconk, Ontario, November 12, 1922. Identifying Cordis Hamilton as Cordelia Wensley involved an intensive search.
- 27 In C. A. Armstrong, *Away Back in Clarendon and Miller*, 2nd ed. (n.p.: North Frontenac Printing Service, 1976), 5. Archie Wensley dated the fire as about 1914, but Beryl's papers and photos show it was fall 1917.
- 28 CFP, G. R. Curran, Ontario Department of Agriculture, Napanee, ON, n.d., 1918. Circular, "Junior Soldiers of the Soil Rural School Fairs, 1918, Instructions to Teachers."
- 29 CFP, her Bible had the end page entry, "S.B.C. Aug. 27., 1918. Cambrai Road. France," followed by a set of devotional readings.
- 30 CFP, Leslie Curtis to Mercie Curtis Peever, April 11, 1919.
- 31 Russett Avenue was an easy commute to the Curtis Press.
- 32 See Jason Ellis, *A Class by Themselves?: The Origins of Special Education in Toronto and Beyond* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019); Jason Ellis, "'All Methods—and Wedded to None': The Deaf Education Methods Debate and Progressive Educational Reform in Toronto, Canada, 1922–1945," *Paedagogica Historica* 50, no. 3 (2014): 371–89.
- 33 Thomas Edward Champion, ed., *The Methodist Churches of Toronto* (Toronto: G. M. Rose and Sons, 1899), 259–61; Gale Hannan, "Being Hard of Hearing in 1921," *Canadian Audiologist* 7, no. 4 (2020): n.p.; Alexander MacLeod Manson, "The Work of the Protestant Churches for the Deaf in North America 1815–1949, III," *American Annals of the Deaf* 95 (1950): 461–85.
- 34 Mrs. J. H. Palin is elusive. She is not the activist Imogene Palen studied in detail by Jason Ellis.
- 35 CFP, M. Faircloth, 20 Charles St. E., Toronto, to Miss B. Curtis, 97 Russett Ave., Toronto, May 3, 1922. She published *Lip Reading, Study and Practice* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1946).
- 36 CFP, Minnie Faircloth to Beryl Curtis, Coboconk, Ontario, n.d. (Sept.–early Oct. 1922).
- 37 CFP, W. H. Stevens, BA, Inspector of Public Schools, Lindsay, to Miss Beryl G. Curtis, Coboconk, Ont., November 2, 1922. The circular probably told teachers with thirds that they needed to attend a normal school to be renewed.
- 38 CFP, C. L. F. McKenzie, Principal, Model School, to Miss Beryl G. Curtis, Coboconk, Ont., October 12, 1922. Department of Education, Ontario, "December Examinations, 1922. Autumn Model Schools," printed examination papers with Beryl's notations.

- 39 *Report of the Minister of Education, Province of Ontario, for the Year 1922* (Toronto: United Press Limited, 1923). Even tiny School Section 18, North Augusta, had a second class teacher in 1921.
- 40 CFP, J. S. Card to Miss Curtis, December 20, 1922.
- 41 Private Papers Collection of the Museum of Lennox and Addington, "M. R. Reid's School Inspector's Reports 1923–1929," 42–43; 66–67; 90–91. There was no school well; students took it in turn to tote a bucket of water up school hill and everyone drank out of the same dipper.
- 42 CFP, Mrs. C. Lloyd to Miss Curtiss, n.d., 1925; Mrs. S. Vannmast (?illegible) to Miss Curtis, n.d., 1925; Ernest J. Lemke to Beryl, May 4, 1925. Beneath the rosy views of the "excellent disciplinarian" and my affection, there may be another figure.
- 43 *Report of the Minister of Education....* (Toronto: United Press Limited, 1925). Even North Bay Normal School graduated 137 teachers in 1922. See *Tenth Annual Year Book Published by the Students of North Bay Normal School*, June 1922, 58.
- 44 CFP, Beryl G. Curtis, Plevna, Ont., to the Minister of Education, Parliament Bldgs, Toronto, May 4, 1925 (draft).
- 45 CFP, A. Colquhoun, Deputy Minister of Education, to Miss Beryl G. Curtis, Plevna, Ontario, May 18, 1925.
- 46 CFP, W. R. Reid, Inspector, to Miss Curtis, n.p. (probably Fruitland), June 24, 1925. The two schools were probably on the "Special List" for which a limited third teacher could be appointed by the inspector without a special application to the minister. The Department of Education abolished the list in 1926.
- 47 CFP, Walter W. Barr, Secretary, School Section 12, Olden Township, to Beryl Curtis, Athens, ON, June 27, 1925.
- 48 *Daily British Whig*, January 30, 1926. Maybe the presence of another woman teacher encouraged her to take Mountain Grove. Penman started at \$1,000 and was reduced to \$800. She left at the end of the school year.
- 49 *Daily British Whig*, August 9, 1926, for the "add."
- 50 Leslie and Beryl visited Plevna together, perhaps sussing out the prospects of his teaching at Wensley and she returning to Plevna; *Daily British Whig*, May 26, 1926; CFP, M. R. Reid to Beryl G. Curtis, Mountain Grove, June 22, 1926. Private Papers Collection of the Museum of Lennox and Addington, "M. R. Reid's School Inspector's Reports 1923–1929," 258, *Report of the Minister of Education Province of Ontario for the Year 1926* (Toronto: King's Printer, 1927), 6–8.
- 51 CFP, membership card and button pin for the Ontario Educational Association, 1927–28.
- 52 CFP, M. R. Reid, Inspector of Public Schools of North Frontenac and Addington, Sharbot Lake, to Miss Beryl G. Curtis, R.3., Puslinch, ON, September 27, 1927; that's his grammar.
- 53 CFP, M. R. Reid, Inspector of Public Schools, Frontenac and North Addington, Sharbot Lake, ON, to Miss Beryl G. Curtis, Puslinch, ON, March 24, 1928. In fact, she had taught nine years in his district but had, in his reckoning, more than 110 months' experience.
- 54 CFP, an envelope with Leslie's promissory note for \$200 and detailed plans for the farm. William Curtis, Boston, to Miss Beryl G. Curtis, Mountain Grove (forwarded to Athens), July 7, 1927; same to same, January 17, 1928.
- 55 CFP, Beryl kept several letters from Emma Honeywell and the acceptance letter for the Moncton job.

- 56 CFP, Grant L. Handley, Secretary, Superannuation Commission, to Miss Beryl G. Curtis, Athens, Ontario, January 1, 1929.
- 57 CFP, Frank L. Woodley, Secretary, Superannuation Commission, to Mrs. Beryl G. McCuen, R.R. 1. Freelon, Ontario, February 25, 1932.
- 58 Bruce Curtis, "On Distributed Literacy. Textually Mediated Social Relations in a Colonial Context," *Paedagogica Historica* 44, no. 1–2 (2008): 231–42.