



Fact Sheet **Lady Mary Pellatt**

Our first Chief Commissioner, Lady Mary Pellatt, lived in a castle! Who was this woman who did so much to promote and organize Guiding in Canada? She was born Mary Dodgson, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Dodgson in Toronto in 1858. She was educated at Bishop Strachan School in Toronto and attended St. Simon's Anglican Church and St. James' Cathedral. On June 15, 1882, she married Henry Mill Pellatt of Kingston, who later became Major-General Sir Henry M. Pellatt, C.V.O., D.C.L., knighted in 1905 for his service to the Canadian Militia.

How exciting it must have been for the Guides and their leaders to attend Girl Guide rallies at her home, Casa Loma. The first visit took place in 1913 and included 250 Girl Guides who toured the conservatories, the palatial stables, climbed the circular staircase to the top turret and then were served tea in the Palm Room. The *Mail and Empire*, Toronto, Saturday, April 19, 1913, reports that Guides:

"...felt perfectly at home, for Lady Pellatt is a thoughtful hostess and she saw to it that there was nothing of a formal nature to embarrass the girls... They enjoyed themselves immensely without riotous romping or unseemingly conduct of any kind. Lady Pellatt showed her confidence in them by allowing them to roam at will through the beautiful conservatories..."

Pictures that have come to light (National Archives) show Guides in September of 1915 marching and dancing, with tents and marquees set up, on the expansive lawn of Casa Loma. These visits and rallies became an annual event to encourage the Girl Guides and their activities. And not only was their home open—rallies in the summer and skating on the private curling rink in winter—but also their country place at King, Ontario, Lake Marie Farm, was the destination for trips by motor and carriages planned by Lady Pellatt herself.

In the 1990s we would call Lady Pellatt a professional volunteer. Over the years she was Regent of Queen's Own Chapter, I.O.D.E.; life member of the Women's Art Association; life patron of the National Council of Women; honorary member of the Women's Canadian Club (in Boston, Massachusetts); member of the St. James' Cathedral Women's Club; member of the Toronto Women's Musical Club; a member of the War Memorial Club, Toronto; as well as being elevated to the rank of Lady of Grace in the Order of St. John of Jerusalem for her work with the Girl Guides.

Pictures in the National Archives show Sir Henry Pellatt inspecting the Boy Scout Parade at Gunnersbury Park, England, in September 1910. The Movement was therefore not new to Lady Pellatt when Agnes Baden-Powell warranted her as Chief Commissioner of the Dominion of Canada Girl Guides on July 24, 1912. Her ability to

motivate women had been earlier proven when she organized the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada Chapter of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire and served as its first Regent.

Girl Guides had begun springing up in Canada since 1910. There were 250 Companies across the country as Lady Pellatt along with Mrs. Rosalie Torrington, National Council of Women; Mrs. A.E. Gooderham, Independent Order of Daughters of the Empire; Lady S. Falconer, Young Women's Christian Association; Mrs. Helen C. Parker, Canadian Business Women's Club; and Mrs. Adelaide Plumtre, Canadian Red Cross, began "the work of forming a Girl Guide Headquarters in Canada."

A quotation from Lady Pellatt in those early days shows that there was some opposition to the Girl Guide Movement and that its purpose for being was already obvious:

"The girls will be mothers of our citizens by-and-by. We must train them for womanhood and for citizenship. That is the purpose of the Movement. Who said it meant unsexing? It is not an imitation of the Boy Scout Movement; for there is no militarism in it. It is purely a women's scheme."

By 1917 Lady Pellatt had persuaded Lady MacKenzie and Lady White to join the Dominion Council. Before the end of the year, wives and daughters of Lieutenant Governors in other Provinces were asked to be Honorary Vice Presidents of the Dominion Council.

The important events in the career of Lady Pellatt as our Chief Commissioner are as follows:

July 24, 1912

Warranted as Chief Commissioner of Canada.

December 12, 1912

Opening of Headquarters, 20 College Street, Toronto. At that time, she acknowledged the pioneer work of Miss Marjorie Jarvis and Miss Cooper, members of the local committee.

January 19, 1913

Received the Girl Guides' Thanks Badge from Lieutenant Governor Sir John Gibson as requested by Agnes Baden-Powell.

March 1913

Began visits, rallies and fêtes at Casa Loma.

July 1913

Visited the 2nd Toronto Company Camp on the shores of Lake Ontario near Port Credit.

1913 onward

Lady Pellatt worked in co-operation with the organizers of the Canadian National Exhibition and the Girl Guides were very much a part of Women's Day Activities, displaying badge work, exhibiting semaphore and trooping the colours in front of the grandstand.

March 1914

Lady Pellatt watched the annual fête from her bedroom window as she was too ill to leave her room.

1914

At Lady Pellatt's request, Guides contributed toys, books, candies and gifts of clothing to the children of Belgium. Throughout World War I, the Guide program included many projects to help the soldiers, the children and the needy at home and abroad.

February 25, 1915

Created Lady of Grace, St. John of Jerusalem.

June 1916

Presented the first Silver Fish to Miss Florence Hardy of Toronto at the annual rally at Casa Loma. Guides came from Oshawa, Oakville, Picton, Newmarket, Thamesville and Toronto.

1917

An Act of Parliament incorporated the Canadian Girl Guides Association; seven-year-olds enrolled as Rosebuds in Guide Companies; Senior Guides developed their own activities.

1918

The 10,000 Girl Guides of Canada contributed 16,700 pairs of boots for France at Lady Pellatt's instigation.

May 25 - May 27, 1919

Lord and Lady Baden-Powell came to visit Casa Loma. A special Girl Guide Rally welcomed the Empire's Chief Guide. Lady Baden-Powell presented the Silver Fish to three leaders from Toronto, Burnaby and Victoria, and to two Guides from Toronto and Windsor.

August 1919

Presented the Address of Welcome from the Canadian Girl Guides to His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, at Parliament Buildings, Toronto.

1921

Helped Senior Guides establish their own program as Rangers. Reviewed Brownies at a Brownie Revel in High Park. This was her last public appearance as Chief

Commissioner.

The same year, Lady Pellatt resigned because of poor health. There were now 17,500 Guides and 1,000 Junior Guides (Brownies) in Canada.

1922

Received the Silver Fish which had become the highest award in Guiding.

1924

Lady Pellatt died suddenly of heart failure on April 24th. The Girl Guides formed a Guard of Honour for her funeral at St. James' Cathedral in Toronto. She was buried in her Girl Guide uniform at King, Ontario.