

A COLONIAL LIBRARY:

The Books in the Point Ellice House Collection

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WHAT CAN YOU LEARN about someone by perusing the shelves of their personal library? People whose livelihood is books, whether scholars, writers, or readers, are drawn to packed shelves like a magnet, looking for traces of personal histories, intellectual histories, identities tried on and discarded, indicators of an inner life that might otherwise be inaccessible. Scholars have made this curiosity professional, trying to locate the specific copy of Thomas Aquinas owned by Samuel Coleridge, for example, or the copy of *Paradise Lost* given to Alfred Tennyson by his father, and poring over marginalia or other signs of use. But what about the libraries of ordinary, middlebrow readers? Reading is a historical practice, and book purchasing a social and economic one; personal libraries can indicate changing tastes and national allegiances, social alliances, class anxieties, and leisure practices. But most historical libraries are broken up and the books dispersed when their owners die, so opportunities to do this kind of study are rare. The library at Point Ellice House, the home of Peter O'Reilly and his family, is an exception. The books that are part of the Point Ellice House collection provide evidence of the various roles of O'Reilly and his family in the maintenance of colonial hierarchies, the theft of Indigenous lands, and the erasure of Indigenous sovereignty in British Columbia.

Point Ellice Heritage House and Museum in Victoria is unique among heritage sites in British Columbia because when it was acquired by the provincial government in 1975, it still contained over sixteen thousand household objects that are documented as having been used by its inhabitants. When the objects were sorted through by curators, many of the more fragile items were transferred to the Royal BC Museum or the BC Archives, but many remained in situ; among these are approximately 450 books that were owned and used by three generations

* I am grateful for the opportunities to consult the Point Ellice House collection provided to me and my students by the Vancouver Island Local Historical Society, the Métis Nation of BC, and the BC Provincial Heritage Branch, especially Roger Tinney.



Figure 1. Point Ellice House, the O'Reilly home in Victoria; Mrs. A.J. O'Reilly on the lawn with the dogs. Source: Image C-03918 courtesy of the BC Archives.

of the O'Reilly family, over the period between 1867 when they moved in and 1975 when the house was sold to the BC government for use as a museum. Much of the library consists of books that predictably reinforce the racial and social status of a colonial British family, though a few of them show evidence of use such as marginalia and inscriptions that provide surprising glimpses of individuals.¹ But for the O'Reilly family, these books mainly functioned as reminders of the legitimacy of their role in colonial expansion and constituted the cultural capital that justified the family's growing wealth and high social status.

Point Ellice House is located on the waterfront in Victoria on the traditional territory of the *lək'wəŋən* People, directly across the Gorge from the former site of the Songhees village that was located on Victoria Harbour between 1866 and 1911. The house was constructed in 1862 for the Wallace family, which consisted of Charles Wentworth Wallace

¹ One important book that was removed to the BC Archives was Peter O'Reilly's copy of Herbert Broom and Leonard Shelford, *The Practice of the County Court* (1858), a book for country magistrates in England that provided guidance on how to hold a court (in lieu of legal training). The book is very worn, and its binding has been inexpertly repaired with a piece of untanned cowhide (hair still attached). The inside covers are adorned with pen sketches of horses; Peter O'Reilly was an expert horseman and brought his favourite stallion with him from England, and the library also contains numerous books about dogs and horses.



Figure 2. Siblings Charlotte Kathleen O'Reilly, Arthur John O'Reilly, and Francis Joseph O'Reilly. *Source:* Image C-03940 courtesy of the BC Archives.

and his wife Kate Work, the mixed-race daughter of former Hudson's Bay Company officer John Work and his wife Josette Legace. The Wallaces fell on hard times and sold Point Ellice in 1867 to Peter O'Reilly (1827–1905) and his wife Caroline Trutch (1834–1899), who moved in December from New Westminster just in time for the birth of their second child, Kathleen. The family eventually consisted of Caroline and Peter and their four children Frank (1866–1941), Kathleen (1867–1945), Mary (1869–1876), and Arthur John (Jack) (1873–1946). Kathleen lived in the house until her death, when it was taken over by her brother Jack, and later by his son John Windham O'Reilly, who was living there and operating it as a private museum when the house was sold to the province.

Peter O'Reilly was a BC government official who held a variety of jobs over his long career. A former officer in the Irish Revenue Police, he emigrated in 1859, just after the discovery of gold in the Fraser River. He was immediately appointed stipendiary magistrate and subsequently

high sherriff of the colony and gold commissioner. He became county court judge of Yale district in 1867 and served until 1880, when he retired from this position to become the sole Indian reserve commissioner, a position he held until 1898. O'Reilly became prosperous and successful, partly through his connections: in 1863 he married Caroline, the sister of Joseph Trutch, an English engineer and politician who became chief commissioner of lands and works for the colony, and later its first lieutenant governor. A close friend of Trutch and of Matthew Bailie Begbie, who similarly travelled by horseback on the mainland for much of his working year, O'Reilly became a member of the executive council, and his family was socially acquainted with the elite of Victoria society, including not just the Trutches but the Musgraves, the Dunsmuirs, and officers stationed at the nearby Esquimalt naval base. However, according to Kenneth Brealey, "it seems clear from his unofficial correspondence that he considered his government work as supplementary to maintaining his own standing and investments in the colonial and provincial elites."² Because his work took him to the Interior for months at a time, he was in a position to invest early in settlement lands, buying lots in advantageous locations in newly opened townsites and ranching districts; he lent money for mortgages, and he invested in mineral claims as well as Victoria businesses like Albion Iron Works and the newly formed municipal water company. All of these business interests relied on dispossessing Indigenous Peoples, whether on the coast or in the Interior, of their land and resource rights. Indeed, his investments were so tied to the impoverishment of First Nations that they potentially infringed on his impartiality as a magistrate and as a reserve commissioner, and he feared accusations of conflict of interest.³

The wealth gained by O'Reilly through his investments supported a lifestyle that might have been considered comfortably middle class in England, but verged on palatial in colonial British Columbia. The Point Ellice House collection, including imported china and mahogany furniture, spice cabinets and recipes, needlework, coal stoves, and other household paraphernalia, is a treasure trove for information about the privileged lives of colonial officials in early British Columbia. O'Reilly's letters and diaries, now located at the BC Archives, have been important

² Kenneth Brealey, "Travels from Point Ellice: Peter O'Reilly and the Indian Reserve System in British Columbia," *BC Studies* 115/116 (1997/98): 225.

³ David Ricardo Williams notes that "a letter [Peter O'Reilly] wrote to Crease in 1865 implies there were private mutterings about conflict of interest." David Ricardo Williams, "Peter O'Reilly," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* 13 (Toronto: University of Toronto/Université Laval, 1994), online edition, https://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/o_reilly_peter_13E.html.

sources for scholars researching political alliances and treaty issues in early British Columbia. But the domestic objects that remain in the house are equally important for what they show about the material history and cultural practices of colonial British Columbia. Two books about the contents of the house by historian Virginia Careless were published by the Royal BC Museum, and in addition a chapter of John Ota's book *The Kitchen* is devoted to the objects, recipes, and ambience of the Point Ellice kitchen.⁴ Cyril Hume's careful research into the history of the heritage garden at Point Ellice has been documented as well.⁵ But nothing has been written about the books in the collection, and they seem to have been largely ignored until, as a volunteer with the Vancouver Island Local History Society, I began to investigate them.

In Victoria in the late nineteenth century, public access to books and reading was thought of mainly as a tool in the struggle to regulate the behaviour of the young men who thronged Victoria in the wake of the gold rush.⁶ "Upward of 25,000 miners arrived [in 1858], mostly through Victoria, and many thousands more over the next half-dozen years."⁷ As Heather Dean has shown, public libraries and reading rooms (mostly attached to bookstores) in early Victoria were promoted as alternatives to bars as places for miners to socialize during the winter months when many returned to Victoria from the goldfields.⁸ Private libraries, on the other hand, were signs of status. Owners of private libraries were able to pay the exorbitant prices for books shipped from London or New York by way of San Francisco; they had stable homes that were suitable for the display and enjoyment of books; they were white, literate, and educated.⁹ Moreover, owners of private libraries could prove that they were not

⁴ Virginia A.S. Careless, *Clue to a Culture: Food Preparation of the O'Reilly Family* (Victoria: Royal British Columbia Museum, 1993); Virginia A.S. Careless, *Responding to Fashion: The Clothing of the O'Reilly Family* (Royal British Columbia Museum, 1993); John Ota, *The Kitchen A Journey through History in Search of the Perfect Design* (Toronto: Random House, 2020).

⁵ Cyril D. Hume, "The Point Ellice House Garden: Recovery and Restoration," *APT Bulletin: The Journal of Preservation Technology* 21, no. 2, Landscape History and Preservation (1989): 28–42, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1504250>.

⁶ Adele Perry makes this argument in "Bringing Order to the Backwoods: Regulating British Columbia's Homosocial Culture," in *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 79–96. Her analysis is seconded by Heather Dean, "'The Persuasion of Books': The Significance of Libraries in Colonial British Columbia," *Libraries & the Cultural Record* 46, no. 1 (2011): 50–72; and Alice Gorton, "Civilized, Roughly: Gender, Race, and the Politics of Leisure in Colonial British Columbia, 1860–1871," *BC Studies*. 200 (Winter 2018/2019), <https://doi.org/10.14288/bcs.v0i200.191477>.

⁷ Jean Barman, *On the Cusp of Contact: Gender, Space and Race in the Colonization of British Columbia*, ed. Margery Fee (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 2020), 21.

⁸ Dean, "'The Persuasion of Books,'" *passim*.

⁹ Dean, "'The Persuasion of Books,'" 51–72.

just literate: they were educated in the forms of “sweetness and light” that, as Matthew Arnold famously argued in *Culture and Anarchy*, were the real signs of “civilisation.”¹⁰ Arnold, writing in the wake of reforms that would see literacy education become publicly funded in England and eventually lead to universal male suffrage, wrote that literacy and the vote would not lead to social stability unless it were accompanied by “culture,” the nurturing of what he saw as traditional English values (including the class system) through acquaintance with the greats of English literature and English history.¹¹ Private libraries and evidence of recreational reading among the rich was therefore a sign not just of moneyed leisure, but of cultural refinement and capacity to govern. The acquisition and display of books was mobilized to justify the growing power of settler elites, as the population of Indigenous and mixed-race people, Chinese and Kanaka (Hawaiian) immigrants, Americans, and African-Americans challenged their ideas of colonial hierarchy.¹²

One of the difficulties of researching print material in the Point Ellice House collection is the status of the books and periodicals as heritage artifacts rather than as part of an active library. Each book is catalogued according to practices created for museum artifacts rather than the more familiar Dewey Decimal or Library of Congress systems. Therefore, they are not organized by author, title, date, or genre, but instead merely listed as one of many objects related to the category “household,” along with cream jugs, chamber pots, card tables, and thimbles. Some books have no notation under “Object type,” and the publisher data is buried in a long paragraph that includes a physical description of the book. While the digital catalogue usually indicates a specific room as the location of a book, in Point Ellice House this may mean the book is on display on a bookshelf, or wrapped and stored in an inaccessible cupboard, necessitating an afternoon of unwrapping and rewrapping until the book is found. The date of publication in the digital catalogue is often speculative, and even the physical descriptions of books may lack the specificity that a book historian might find telling. Researchers who know what they are looking for can search the digital catalogue with varying degrees of success, but the best way to research a collection of books is to see the physical objects.

The museum itself offers few amenities for the researcher: a folding table set up in the dark central hall, and a collections manager to sort

¹⁰ Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* (London: Smith Elder and Co., 1869), chapter 1.

¹¹ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, chapter 1.

¹² Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, passim; Barman, *On the Cusp of Contact*, passim.



Figure 3. Point Ellice House; the Peter O'Reilly home; interior; Victoria. *Source:* Image Item G-03851 courtesy of the BC Archives.

through the contents of the “archives” in a former bedroom and the odd cupboards where books are located. But even under these circumstances, the “archival jolt” of discovery is not far away.¹³ I was assured by museum staff that, although there were several old Bibles, there was no family Bible in the collection; I found a handwritten family tree between the Old and New Testaments in the Bible Caroline O'Reilly inherited from her mother, Charlotte Trutch. I found a tiny nosegay of flowers, stems wrapped in sewing thread, pressed between pages in a cookbook belonging to Kathleen O'Reilly, and a four-leaf clover in Jack's copy of *The Book of Common Prayer*. I found a very early copy of Lewis Carroll's *Alice Through the Looking Glass* (1872), a book of very partisan Irish political cartoons, and a strip of photo-booth portraits from the early twentieth century. Each of these discoveries evokes the material reality of the books' owners: their personalities, the quotidian circumstances of their lives, the various joys and blindnesses that characterized the colonial mindset.

¹³ Ted Bishop, *Riding with Rilke: Reflections on Motorcycles and Books* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2006), 33.

The Point Ellice books display some evidence of how the first generation of the O'Reilly family obtained their reading material. Some of the books contain a small paper stamp indicating that they were purchased at T.N. Hibben and Co., founded in 1858 and one of the oldest and best-known bookstores in the colony. The O'Reilly family had an account at Hibben's, and monthly statements that are part of the O'Reilly papers show that they purchased not just books but stationery, pens and pencils, and small gifts at Hibben's. Some of the books have similar stamps that mention bookstores in San Francisco and Seattle. The periodicals in the collection could also have been purchased at Hibben's or received by subscription from England. Many of the books contain inscriptions that indicate they came into the home as gifts to one of the family members, for example, *Alice Through the Looking Glass* is inscribed to Kathleen O'Reilly from her uncle Joseph Trutch, and a cookbook, *The Young Housewife's Daily Assistant on All Matters Relating to Cookery and Housekeeping* (1866) is inscribed by Carry Hare, a cousin on the Trutch side, and then by Zoe Trutch, John Trutch's wife. Some of the books were brought from England as personal possessions by family members and friends; two examples would be Charlottle Trutch's family Bible (1725) and a book of sermons dating from Peter's sojourn at university. An inscription by Elinor Dunsmuir in one book suggests it was borrowed and never returned.

Many of the books in the Point Ellice House collection would have served practical purposes. There are catalogues of rose varieties, school textbooks belonging to Frank or Jack, as well as copies of the statutes of British Columbia and of Canada that would have been necessary for Peter O'Reilly's work. About a third of the books can be described as "religious," including popular books of religious verse and daily meditation, as well as complete Bibles, New Testaments, books of hymns, sermons, and thirty-two copies of *The Book of Common Prayer*.¹⁴ There are gift copies of canonical poets such as Alfred Tennyson and William Shakespeare, and of popular poets such as Felicia Hemans. The rest of the library is made up of popular and classic novels, books of travel and nonfiction, children's books, and runs of well-known British periodicals

¹⁴ *The Book of Common Prayer* is a handbook to Anglican church services, and each member of the congregation would be expected to have one. New copies would have been common gifts for birthdays or Christmas, and changes to the order of the service might also have necessitated replacing them. These practices lead to the question of what to do with ones that were replaced, and given the large number in the collection, they were probably put on a shelf and forgotten.

such as *The Illustrated London News*, *The Queen*, *Punch*, and *Household Words*. There are almost no Canadian books, periodicals, or newspapers.

The collection includes few novels. This is consistent with the general Victorian suspicion of the moral value of fiction, which was supposed to corrupt weak minds by making immoral choices seem exciting and attractive. Evidence that this point of view was prevalent in the colony is found in the pages of *The British Colonist* newspaper, where citizens argued that the new library should contain mainly religious texts and practical works of nonfiction, to support miners and settlers in their moral character and replace the good advice of a family.¹⁵ The colonial government even censored the reading of the accused in jail: *The British Colonist* reported on 24 March 1860 that “Governor Douglas paid a visit to the prison the other evening and found the prisoners – such as could pay for light – engaged in reading. He immediately ordered the books to be seized, and the next day an examination into their contents was had by Judge Pemberton, who confiscated all works not of a strictly religious or instructive character.”¹⁶ Thus it is not surprising that the novels that are included in the collection are often canonical British nineteenth-century novels – including Dickens, Trollope, and Thackeray – as well as some popular Victorian and Edwardian works: *John Halifax, Gentleman*, and the novels of Captain Marryat and Bulwer-Lytton. Few of the novels can be securely identified as having belonged to Peter or Caroline, but Peter’s diaries occasionally mention books he was reading: in 1861 and 1862, he noted that he read *Love Me Little, Love Me Long* by Charles Reade (1857), *Adam Bede* by George Eliot (1859), *A Life for a Life* by Dinah Maria Mulock (1859), and *Lewis Arundel; or the Railroad of Life* by Frank E. Smedley (1852). Since Peter was located in the Interior in the tiny settlement of Hope in 1861, this jumble of works by popular authors perhaps indicates more about the lack of choice in this isolated region than his morals or his taste.

Since novels were potentially corrupting, both public and private libraries focused on nonfiction instead. Supporters of public libraries and reading rooms were in agreement that fiction was not suitable reading for idle miners and young people; books on mining and geology, history, and “classics” were preferred by Victoria’s elite.¹⁷ The nonfiction in the Point Ellice House collection greatly outnumbers the novels and includes walking guides to major European cities; light reading designed to

¹⁵ See Dean, “The Persuasion of Books,” passim.

¹⁶ A. De Cosmos, ed., “Won’t Let Them Read Novels,” *The British Colonist*, 24 March 1860, 2.

¹⁷ See Dean, “The Persuasion of Books,” passim.

introduce European history and Greek and Roman classics; *Sketches of Persia*; the *Letters of Queen Victoria*; and accounts of British rule in India. Many works of travel and popular history appear, such as *The Crescent and the Cross* by Eliot Warburton, and the eight volumes of *Lives of the Queens of England* by Agnes Strickland (Susanna Moodie's older and better-known sister). These works indicate conservatism, anglophilia, and a habit of reading for intellectual and moral "improvement," rather than challenge to the status quo.

Aside from a few Canadian public-school textbooks that belonged to John Windham O'Reilly, Peter's grandson, Canadian books in the collection are mainly remarkable for their absence. The collection includes a single book of poems by Lily Ann Lefevre, a Vancouver poet and charity fundraiser who inscribed a volume of her work (with love) to Kathleen, but there is little evidence of interest in local authors or even popular Canadians of the early twentieth century such as Lucy Maud Montgomery or Ralph Connor. The single copy of *Grip* contains a handwritten note from J.J. Bengough revealing it is a promotional copy distributed by a Toronto hotel. This is not to say that the O'Reillys read no Canadian books. The household inventory from 1887 lists a copy of *Two Months in the Camp of Big Bear* (1885), a histrionic account of the "captivity" of two settler women during the Riel Resistance.¹⁸ It was likely obtained by Peter in the course of his work as a reserve commissioner, along with images and "souvenirs" from 1885 in the collection.¹⁹ But the book is no longer in the collection, perhaps indicating that the family thought it was not important enough to keep after Peter's death, or that it was lent and never returned. A copy of *Three Years Hunting and Trapping in America and the Great North-West* by J. Turner-Turner (1888), set mainly in British Columbia and listed on the 1900 inventory, seems to have had a similar fate.²⁰ Peter's accounts for 1886 show a subscription to the Victoria newspaper *The British Colonist* as well as *The London Times*. A list of books identified as "Colonial Office," perhaps loaned to Peter O'Reilly temporarily, included a two-volume biography of John A. Macdonald

¹⁸ Theresa Gowanlock and Theresa Delaney, *Two Months in the Camp of Big Bear* (Parkdale [Toronto]: Times Office, 1885).

¹⁹ The papers in the O'Reilly family fonds at the British Columbia Archives (BCA) contain two household inventories, located in series MS-2894, files 3 (dated 1887) and 4 (1900), box 51. These list all the household objects and their locations (vases, rugs, drapes, etc.) and were a common way for the mistress of Victorian household to keep track of her belongings in a house that employed servants. *Two Months in the Camp of Big Bear* is listed as "Big Bear's Camp" under the heading "Division one back," file 3, box 51.

²⁰ J. Turner-Turner, *Three Years Hunting and Trapping in America and the Great Northwest* (London: Maclure & Co., 1888).

(whom O'Reilly knew personally), a copy of *Barren Ground of Northern Canada* (1892) by Victoria author Warburton Pike, and Alexander Begg's *History of British Columbia* (1894).²¹ Their presence suggest that Peter, at least, felt the need to read some locally focused books as part of his job.

Poetry in the collection includes collected works of Walter Scott, Thomas Moore, Eliza Cook, Felicia Hemans, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Oliver Goldsmith, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Robert Browning, Robert Burns, and Roberts Southey, many of them inscribed to Kathleen by people who are no longer identifiable. Kathleen's letters reveal that she exchanged books of poetry with female friends and with male suitors: she sent a copy of *Songs of the Cascades* by BC poet John Martley to Harry Stanhope, the future Earl of Chesterfield, whose proposal of marriage she had turned down.²² These books seem to be more indicative of a practice of gift-giving and friendship, rather than a taste for poetry, because many of these collections show little evidence of use, their gilded pages and expensive bindings untouched. An exception is Kathleen's copy of the *Poetical Works of Tennyson* whose spine is broken at page 277, in the middle of Tennyson's famous poem "In Memoriam." This page features section CVI, also known as "Ring Out, Wild Bells," the poem that marks the New Year in the cycle. The broken spine suggests that Kathleen may have returned to it, perhaps yearly, to mark her birthday on 31 December; this supposition is confirmed by the gently pencilled page number on the title page of the volume.

The prevalence of religious books in the collection is not surprising: the family attended St. John's and St. Saviour's Anglican Churches, and Peter's account book carefully records fifty cent contributions to the collection plate weekly, as well as the occasional two dollar contribution for the Cathedral. The collection includes numerous Bibles and many copies of *The Book of Common Prayer*, but the prevalence of popular religious books in addition to sanctioned Anglican texts perhaps requires some context. For conscientious Protestants in the Victorian period and early twentieth century, the context of reading was always moral, rather than recreational, and the Anglican Church in particular promoted private devotional reading of approved texts to mitigate the democratizing

²¹ J.E. Collins, *Canada's Patriot Statesman: The Life and Career of the Right Honourable Sir John A. Macdonald* (Toronto: Rose, 1891); Warburton Pike, *Barren Ground of Northern Canada* (London: Macmillan, 1892); Alexander Begg, *History of British Columbia* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1894).

²² Stanhope to Kathleen O'Reilly, May 23 [1896], file 3, box 6, Add MSS 412, O'Reilly family fonds, BCA.

effects of increasing literacy.²³ The presence of many additional forms of Christian reading in the library, such as sentimental religious verse, books of proverbs and their interpretations, books intended for Christian meditation, children's Bibles, and Biblical hero or heroine storybooks, makes the collection typical of the middle-class English household.²⁴

The forms of religious belief among Anglicans in this period are well described by R.C.K. Ensor in his classic history, *England 1870–1914*.²⁵ Ensor suggests that despite the eventual rise of Tractarianism in the Established Church, the influence of “evangelicalism” was pervasive among Christian believers in England, characterized by “literal stress on the Bible,” “certainty about the existence of an afterlife of rewards and punishments,” and the belief that “the present life is only important as a preparation for eternity.”²⁶ For Anglicans, frequent attendance at communion services was not a requirement – Queen Victoria and Prince Albert only did it at Christmas and Easter – but living a Christian life was an important personal goal. This included strict observance of the Sabbath: “Even books were censored for the day; novels were banned; you might only read the Bible or serious, preferably religious, works. Thus sermons had large sales, and so did ‘magazines for Sunday reading.’”²⁷ In Peter O'Reilly's earliest diaries (when he lived in the Interior at Hope or Yale) he mentions attendance at church services whenever a minister was stationed locally; on Sundays when he could not travel to a nearby service, he mentions spending part of the day reading, frequently focusing on the day's service in *The Book of Common Prayer*.

Three examples of notable religious books in the collection are: the Bible belonging to the Trutch family, inscribed on the free endpaper with the name of “Charlotte Hannah Trutch, Stoke St Mary December 20, 1857”; *The Christian Year* inscribed “Kathleen O'Reilly 9th May 1884”; and *The Book of Common Prayer* inscribed to Jack O'Reilly “with his mother's love August 1888.”²⁸ The Trutch Bible is a quarto-sized volume consisting of a complete King James Bible printed by “John Basket, Oxford, Printer to the University” bound together with “Sacred

²³ See Joshua King, “John Keble's *The Christian Year*: Private Reading and Imagined National Religious Community,” *Victorian Literature and Culture* 40, no. 2 (2012): 397–420.

²⁴ Krista Lysack, “‘Found in Every Room’: Victorian Devotional Literature,” in *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Religion*, ed. Mark Knight (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2016), 289–97.

²⁵ R.C.K. Ensor, *England 1870–1914* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1936).

²⁶ Ensor, *England*, 137–38.

²⁷ Ensor, *England*, 140.

²⁸ These items appear in the Point Ellice House (PEH) artifact catalogue as PEH1975.001.2698; PEH1975.001.488; and PEH1975.001.410.

geography, contained in six maps” and two hundred engravings of Biblical scenes by the artist and engraver James Cole (1715–1774). The entire book is bound in brown calf with a tooled border (a triple line and a decorative border) and plain endpapers and published by “Richard Ware, at the Bible and Sun, Warwick Lane at Amen Corner” dated MDCCXXV, or 1725. The title *Holy Bible* is tooled in gilt on the spine, along with ridges, lines, and florets.

The origins and history of the “Family Bible,” in which significant dates in a family history are recorded, is discussed by Mary Wilson Carpenter in her book *Imperial Bibles, Domestic Bodies*.²⁹ Carpenter describes Bibles published in serial parts with illustrations and explanatory notes that began to appear in the early eighteenth century in England in response to the newly created *Copyright Act*, which established authorship as a basis of copyright. (While the authorship of the Bible was undetermined, a publisher could validly claim that the notes, maps, and illustrations were certainly his copyrighted work.) While the Trutch Bible would have been excluded from Carpenter’s study (because it doesn’t have the word “family” in the title), it does share many characteristics with the Bibles she discusses. Carpenter argues these Bibles were emblems of a new “consumer Christianity” in which they functioned as a visible testimony to “the family’s piety and respectability.”³⁰ Carpenter notes that the characteristics of Family Bibles changed over the hundred years or so that they were popular, with eighteenth-century publications featuring illustrations of barely clad women and violent scenes from the Old Testament aimed at male purchasers, while publications from later in the nineteenth century emphasized illustrations of mothers and babies, presumably aimed at female consumers. Many Family Bibles from the Victorian period featured warnings next to material deemed unsuitable for family reading, though the Trutch Bible does not. The title page of the Trutch Bible, featuring allegorical figures marked “Law” and “Gospel” as well as the tablets containing the Ten Commandments, would seem to be consistent with Carpenter’s findings on early Family Bibles marketed to male buyers.

As Carpenter notes, the Family Bible represented “the desire to possess an emblem of an ancient and honorable family pedigree, perhaps especially when any pedigree at all was lacking.”³¹ When the families in question, like the Trutches and O’Reillys, had been forced to emigrate

²⁹ Mary Wilson Carpenter, *Imperial Bibles, Domestic Bodies: Women, Sexuality and Religion in the Victorian Market* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003).

³⁰ Carpenter, *Imperial Bibles, Domestic Bodies*, xviii.

³¹ Carpenter, *Imperial Bibles, Domestic Bodies*, xviii.

by looming poverty and lack of opportunity, and struggled to maintain their identities as well-born and English in the rough and tumble colony, such a genealogy might have been doubly reassuring for family members. As previously mentioned, the Trutch Bible does not include a section designed for the owner to inscribe the family genealogy. Instead, the two blank pages between the Old and New Testaments of this Bible have been filled with details about the births, deaths, and marriages of the Trutch and O'Reilly families. A quick comparison of the handwritten genealogy with the facts of the Trutch family during the late nineteenth century reinforces Carpenter's belief that these artifacts were intended to shore up family respectability.

The following appears on the verso of the New Testament title page:

Joseph Barnes, Merchant,
and Charlotte Hannah Williams
were married

October 20th, 1792.

Hannah Barnes, Born October 14th 93
and baptized. Died same day.

Charlotte Hannah Barnes
born November 6th 1799
Charlotte Hannah was married
to William Trutch July 11th 1822

Charlotte Barnes born June 10th 1823
William born July 17th 1824 died 6 weeks after.
Joseph William born June 18 in 1826
John born May 23rd 1828
Emily born October 18th 1829
Caroline Agnes born Sept 16th, 1831

The recto (next page) begins:

Charlotte Barnes Trutch was married
to William Davey January 29th 1846 [illegible] [Holborn]
Mary born November 23rd 1847 died January 1st 1849
Sarah Emily Born December 19th 1848 at Aden
Alice Charlotte born March 9th 1852 at Aden
Bevan William born March 30th 1854
Died June 16th 1855
Grace Risden born September 13th 1855 at Aden

William John Oglivie born August 8th 1860

died on the 13th August 1869

Emily Trutch was married to George Ridout Pinder

August 20th 1849 Aden [illegible]

William George born March 7th 1851 in London

Caroline Acland

Ellen Charlotte born July 22nd 1853 at Secunderabad

Arthur George John born September 14th 1855 in Madras

Joseph William Trutch was married to Julia Elizabeth Hyde in
Oregon City January 2nd 1855.

John Trutch was married to Sara Musgrave
at St. John's church, Victoria, Vancouver Island 8th December 1870

Caroline Agnes Trutch was married to

Peter O'Reilly December 15th 1863

at Christ Church Victoria Vancouver Island

Francis Joseph was born February 9th 1866 at New Westminster

Charlotte Kathleen was born December 31st 1867

in Victoria

Mary Augusta was born November 23rd 1870

Arthur John was born April 4th 1873

Mary Augusta died November 6th 1876

Charlotte Hannah Trutch died November 7th 1876

at Victoria Vancouver Island

The family genealogy begins with the birth of Charlotte Hannah Barnes to Joseph and Charlotte Hannah Barnes (known as Hannah) in 1799. Charlotte's grandfather William Barnes was a slaveholder in the colony of Jamaica, and Charlotte herself spent most of her childhood there. In 1822 Charlotte married William Trutch, also a slaveholder, a solicitor and lieutenant in the Port Royal Militia in Jamaica. Their four surviving children spent their early childhoods in Jamaica and returned to England with their mother in 1834 when slavery was outlawed in the British Empire, eventually settling with Charlotte's mother Hannah Barnes in Dawlish. William Trutch had been plagued by financial difficulties since the 1820s, due in large part to his major investment in slave labour, and he was imprisoned for debt twice in England (in 1831 and 1834). This debt might have been alleviated by his application for reparations from the government for the loss of his slaves, but for some

reason this payment was denied. When he escaped from debtors' prison in 1834, a notice appeared in *The Western Times* that revealed his further disgrace: "It is supposed that [William Trutch] is cohabiting with a Young Woman, of about 23 Years of Age, a Native of Exeter, and they have been passing by the name of Mr. and Mrs. Pearce."³²

This marital infidelity appears to have continued throughout the rest of William Trutch's life. In 1855, a boy named Frank William was baptized by his parents William and Lucy Shapton in the parish of Lambeth. In 1860, a Frank William with the same date of birth was (re)baptized at St. Peter's Church in Pimlico, London, but this time, the four-year-old's parents' names are listed as William and Lucy Trutch.³³ William Trutch had died the previous year, thus enabling the rechristening of the child as a Trutch. Given that Lucy identified herself as a widow and continued to use the surname Trutch after William's death, it is possible that the rechristening was a strategic move on Lucy's part to gain a place for her son in William's legitimate family.

Another potential blot on the family tree was the marriage of Emily Trutch to George Ridout Pinder in Aden in 1849. Pinder was rumoured to have fathered a child out of marriage before he married Emily, and though the pair became parents to four children, by 1859 Emily was in England and had charged him with desertion. His relations with women outside of marriage became public when she sued for, and was granted, a divorce in 1862.³⁴ The narratives of William's second family, the family involvement in slavery, and the scandal of William Pinder's

³² "£20. Reward," *The Western Times* VII, no. 330, 19 April 1834, 2. I am grateful to my student Joe Deimer for identifying this source, and for the info on Frank William Shapton below. On William Trutch see also: Lynn Stonier Newman, *Peter O'Reilly, The Rise of a Reluctant Immigrant* (n.p.: Touchwood Editions, 2010), 45-46; "Joseph Barnes Profile & Legacies Summary," *Legacies of British Slavery* database, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146632163>; C.F. Forbes, ed. "Trutch: An Immigrant Travels to a New Life: Four Letters," *BC Historical News*, 4, no. 1 (April 1971): 8-9, https://www.library.ubc.ca/archives/pdfs/bchf/bchn_1971_04.pdf; "Insolvent debtors Court February 22 IN RE William Trutch," *Morning Post* (London), 23 February 1854, 7, retrieved from "British Library Newspapers" (Gale Primary Sources); "William Trutch," https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Trutch-3#_note-10.

³³ "Frank William Shapton," *London, England Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1823-1923*, <https://www.ancestry.ca/search/collections/1558/>; "Frank William Trutch," *Westminster, London, England, Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813-1919*, <https://www.ancestry.ca/search/collections/61866/>.

³⁴ *Court for Divorce and Matrimonial Causes, later Supreme Court of Judicature: Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Files, 1858-2002*, J 77, Records of the Family Division and predecessors, Records of the Supreme Court of Judicature and related courts, reference number J 77/42/P87, series number J 77, piece number 42, The National Archives, Kew, Surrey, England, accessed online at "Emily Pinder," *England & Wales, Civil Divorce Records, 1858-1918*, <https://www.ancestry.ca/search/collections/2465/>.

illegitimate liaisons are silent in the genealogy recorded by the Barnes/Trutch Bible, a public story of colonial middle-class respectability that conceals Charlotte and Caroline's anxiety about their family legitimacy and financial stability.

Joseph Trutch had recognized early the way that his father's debts and ignominy limited his opportunities in England, and in 1849 followed the gold rush to California where he would later meet and marry Julia Hyde. Frustrated by his inability to put himself forward in US society, in 1859 he moved his family to Victoria and was almost immediately a financial and social success as a contractor building the Cariboo Road. He encouraged his brother John to join him, and in 1862 his mother Charlotte and sister Caroline followed. Joseph introduced Caroline to Peter O'Reilly, and the couple were married the following year. This marriage solidified both Caroline's and Charlotte's places in the colony, and the remainder of the Bible's entries record the births of the four O'Reilly children: Francis Joseph (1866) at New Westminster, followed by Charlotte Kathleen (1867), Mary Augusta (1870), and Arthur John (1873), all of whom were born in Victoria.³⁵

The Trutch/Barnes Bible is thus a record of a peripatetic colonial family, whose identity was British, and whose impulse to move and resettle was governed by the way the British colonial system created, and withdrew, financial and social opportunity. The Bible records the fact that when the opportunity to exploit slave labour in Jamaica was withdrawn, the family suffered social disgrace and near poverty. After a fruitless attempt to rebuild through marriage in colonial India, Charlotte and Caroline made their way to the newest boom district, where Joseph and John were already accessing the system of wealth transfer from Indigenous Peoples to settler owners. The handwritten genealogy in the Trutch Bible covers this history of exploitation and financial failure with a veneer of domestic respectability, in a time and place where domesticity was a class marker dividing the predominantly single male settler population from the colonial elite.³⁶

The Trutch Bible shows signs of use, especially of the illustrations and the map pages, which seem to have been folded and unfolded many times in various configurations. The initial fifty or so text pages show some signs of handling on the edges, but further in it looks as though the book has rarely been opened, possibly because it was treasured for its

³⁵ Robin Fisher, "Trutch, Sir Joseph William," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, volume 13, (Toronto/Quebec City: University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–), accessed 10 June 2025, https://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/trutch_joseph_william_13E.html.

³⁶ Perry, "Bringing Order to the Backwoods," chapter six *passim*.

beauty and its association with Caroline O'Reilly's mother. In contrast, Jack O'Reilly's copy of *The Book of Common Prayer* demonstrates regular use and much wear. Jack received this book from his mother in 1888 when he was fifteen years old and a student at Uppingham School in England. His parents had travelled to England in the fall of 1887, and while Peter had returned in May, Caroline and Kathleen stayed on for six months, so he may have received this book in person just before he returned to school for the Autumn 1888 term. The book comprises the order of service for the Anglican Church – the specific prayers and responses appropriate for Anglican services at different times of the Christian year – and was an indispensable accompaniment to church attendance.

Jack's *Book of Common Prayer* reveals a playful and rebellious sensibility very much at odds with his mother's Bible. The book illustrates the Victorian practice of using books as repositories for treasured texts and objects, being filled with doodles, sketches, and bits of comic verse, so many that the word "illustrated" has been added in pencil to the title page. On the first page of text, a short verse clipped from the newspaper has been pasted at the top of the page:

Daisy, Daisy, tell me your answer do!
 I'm half crazy trying to conquer you.
 Your author I won't disparage
 He ought to keep his carriage,
 But I'm dead beat
 With his last feat
 For it's worse than the '82.

Above this, in pencil, is written "Good old Mother!!" suggesting this verse was pasted here for Jack by his mother. However, the song it is based on, "Daisy Bell," was not published until 1892, so it must have been inserted years after she gave him the book.

A periodical article about a widow who married her female cousin in order to secure access to her deceased husband's estate is pasted onto the free endpaper at the front of the book, dated in black ink January 1893. Presumably Jack preserved this article for its unusual and salacious implications; this supposition is supported by the risqué tone of the other insertions. Verses and comments in pen are still easily readable. Some are noted in the artifact description in the catalogue, for example this one:

There was a young lady named Cholmondly
 Whose form was uncommonly colmondly
 Her bosom was vast
 But was greatly surpassed
 By the improvers she wore superbolmondly.

(The joke here turns on the British pronunciation of *Cholmondly* as “chummly.” “Improvers,” in this case, were padding, like a bustle, worn “superbolmondly.”) But many of the jokes are not included in the catalogue info. For example, here is a poem addressed to the author’s razor:

My razor, you’re a true raseur
 That is you bore me badly
 Your blunt you gash tout mon Coeur
 I bless you wildly, madly!!
 Vraiment, c’est vous qu’j’ai un horreur
 Each morning on rising sadly,
 Wer’it not that shaving’s de rigueur,
 I’d turn and cut you badly.

The humour in the author’s complaint to his razor turns on his punning use of French words among the English. *Raseur* means a boring person in French; Jack complains that his razor bores him in both senses of the word *bore*. “Bless” in this verse indicates hurt or cut, as in the French verb *bless*. “Vraiment, c’est vous qu’j’ai un horreur” translates roughly as “truly, it’s you that frightens me.” The final line, in which the author says he wants to “turn and cut you badly,” suggests the double meaning of the word *cut*, both to injure and to socially snub by turning away and refusing to acknowledge someone. Jack copied this poem from the 28 July 1894 issue of *Punch*.

Another verse, in pencil, reads:

Little Jacky’s in an office,
 somewhere in the town
 On Government Street he spends his mornings
 Strolling up and down
 It’s always business, yes of course,
 what are blue envelopes for
 But oddly enough Jacky’s work
 Is always near Spencer’s door.

One might speculate that Jack wasted his time during office hours lounging near the door of the well-known department store (Spencer’s),

or perhaps he had a female friend who worked there. In any case, this gently teasing verse gives a clear sense of the young Jack's personality.

A similarly revealing joke relies on the listener being aware of the controversy surrounding the bestselling novel *The Heavenly Twins* by Sarah Grand: "Gentleman asking in a bookstore for a book called 'The Angel's Sin.' No sir we have not that book, but we have the sequel, 'The Heavenly Twins.'" The joke depends upon the idea that an "Angel's Sin" would result in the birth of a child, i.e., twins. A copy of *The Heavenly Twins*, which had a reputation for licentiousness and sexual content, is listed on the 1900 inventory of the house (though it no longer appears in the collection). This novel probably belonged to Kathleen, whose frequent trips to London and also to the continent kept her up to date with the most current fiction.

Another original verse gives an idea of how the young Jack might have spent his weekends:

Here comes the old swan all under sail
 Here comes the satellite close at her tail
 Here comes the pheasant sailing so sweet
 Here comes the hyacinth the flower of the fleet

Taken from the sentry box, Esquimalt dock 1895.

This verse is a commentary on a yacht race, perhaps written while observing the contenders from "the sentry box" in Esquimalt.

In addition to these jokes and puns, Jack's *Book of Common Prayer* contains inscriptions that might be considered commentary on the religious text. The page for the Thanksgiving service is pencilled: "To keep a mens sana in copore sano [a sound mind in a sound body], Give me in plenty Pommery Greno [champagne]." And on the contents page is written in red the common Christian saying from Ecclesiastes, "Vanitas, Vanitatum + omnia Vanitas." The verse from the Lord's Prayer, "Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven," is underlined and translated into Spanish in the margin of the page: "Hagase tu voluntad en la tierra asi como en la cielo."

Jack's *Book of Common Prayer* also contains a sewing needle, which is inserted into two pages to hold them together, in the middle of the evening service. My initial thought was that this was a section of the book that his parents didn't want the young Jack to read, but as the pages pinned seem to contain nothing offensive, I think it is more likely that the officiants at Jack's church were in the habit of leaving out this

part of the service, and the pin made it easier for the worshipper to follow along.

The meanings that can be associated with these additions to the book are various. The jokes and puns indicate Jack's sense of humour and his irreverence toward religious worship. But the signs of wear and use in the book also seem to indicate that, while he received it when he was a teenager, this book continued to be a constant companion as Jack grew older and entered the work world. This implies that he continued to attend service and to value this book, and because he valued this book it also became the repository of other things he valued (the book also contains the pressed four-leaf clover).³⁷ Jack's *Book of Common Prayer* indicates the way that objects like books can become palimpsests of their owners' lives, enclosing within their bindings evidence of change and the passage of time. And Jack's willingness to "mess up" his prayer book might also suggest the ways books can represent the gender binary: Kathleen and Caroline's books are pristine, while Jack's, and to a certain extent Frank's, are often marked. The book is duodecimo size and has a limp leather "yapp" binding, with the leather extended over the edges of the text block, typical of present-day Bibles. The edges of the front and back covers have been folded back and worn, suggesting the book may have been frequently carried in a pocket or briefcase. The binding is secured at the spine with glue that has dried and detached from the text block. It was printed by "J Clay and Sons, at the University Press," and published by Cambridge University Press, who held the copyright on the text authorized by the Anglican Church.

Kathleen's copy of *The Christian Year* by John Keble is inscribed on the front free endpaper with her name and the date 9 May 1884, octavo size and perfect bound in limp leather in red, with the title and a plain cross tooled in gilt on the front cover. The book has gilt edges and was printed by Parker and Co., Oxford, and not dated. Each text page is bordered with a plain double line in red. The book is completely unmarked. *The Christian Year* is a series of poems written by John Keble, a prominent Anglican religious writer and member of the Oxford Movement. Each poem is assigned to a particular Sunday, organized around major Christian festivals like Advent, Lent, Easter, and Christmas, and readers are directed to read and meditate on one poem per week throughout the year. The book was originally published in 1827 and was phenomenally popular: it went through 158 editions before its copyright expired in 1873.

³⁷ See Leah Price, *How to Do Things with Books in Victorian Britain* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), chapter 1.

According to Joshua King in his article “John Keble’s *The Christian Year*: Private Reading and Imagined National Community,” “by the century’s end, at least half a million copies had been sold and nearly every literate Victorian household would have had one.”³⁸

The presence of *The Christian Year* and other forms of popular religious reading in the collection indicates the influence of the Oxford Movement, and in particular author John Keble, on the Anglican Church (not only in England, but in its colonies). Keble and his fellow Tractarians wanted to preserve the role of the Church in interpreting doctrine. They worried that indiscriminate access to the text among the newly literate would undermine priestly authority. They tended to encourage the reading of sermons, poems, and other writings approved by the Church, in contrast to more fundamentalist Christian sects who read the Bible exclusively. In addition, the Tractarians promoted the idea of Christian reading as a habitual practice that was part of daily devotion, part of “Christian discipline.” *The Christian Year* in particular was praised for providing a decisive affirmation of faith and a sense of spiritual security to its readers.³⁹

Devotional poetry like *The Christian Year* combined the nineteenth-century practice of private reading with a public sense of belonging to a Christian community. In the early nineteenth century, in both England and Canada, recreational and devotional reading was more often performed in public, with newspapers, periodicals, Bibles, and novels read aloud in homes, taverns, and coffee houses. With the growth of literacy and the proliferation of inexpensive reading material in the later nineteenth century, reading increasingly became a private activity, performed in silence. Changes in domestic architecture encouraged private reading as well: the number of private spaces in a home increased and new kinds of rooms became common, such as private bedrooms, breakfast or sitting rooms for use by ladies, and libraries and studies for men. These changes

³⁸ King, “John Keble’s *The Christian Year*,” 397; see also Lysack, “Found in Every Room,” 291.

³⁹ King, “John Keble’s *The Christian Year*,” 397; see also Lysack, “Found in Every Room,” *passim*. The debate between more conservative Christians who deferred to the authority of the Anglican Church and preferred a more formal ritualistic church service, and more progressive Christians who relied on direct connection to God through the Bible, was played out famously in Victoria in the “Cridge-Hills dispute.” Dean Edward Cridge was expelled from the Anglican Church in 1874 and founded his own “Church of our Lord” because he objected to the conservative beliefs of his Bishop. The case was presided over by Matthew Baillie Begbie, a close friend of the O’Reilly family. Ian MacDonald and Betty O’Keefe, *Quiet Reformers: The Legacy of Early Victoria’s Bishop Edward and Mary Cridge* (Vancouver: Ronsdale Press, 2010), 125–134.

reflect the increasing separation of home and business in the Victorian era and the consequent emphasis on the private home as a sanctuary away from the noise and waste of Victorian industrial cities. And yet, because *The Christian Year* was ubiquitous in middle-class homes and the weekly order of the poems was determined by date, anyone reading the weekly poem privately in their own home could be certain that thousands of other people were reading the same thing, creating a sense of belonging in the wider Anglican community.

Perhaps related to the religious books are the volumes of Shakespeare in the collection. As discussed by Charles LaPorte in *The Victorian Cult of Shakespeare*, Shakespeare's plays and poetry were considered to be divinely inspired by many, and reading Shakespeare would have been comparable to reading more explicitly Christian texts for daily meditation.⁴⁰ The collection at Point Ellice House includes an attractive boxed set of the complete plays in a cardboard container shaped and decorated to resemble the famous Anne Hathaway's Cottage in Stratford, England, which the museum catalogue speculates as being published circa 1900. In addition, there are numerous volumes of individual plays, some of which are inscribed with "speeches to be learnt," implying they are schoolbooks. Whether the O'Reillys considered him divinely inspired or not, Shakespeare then as now was a form of cultural capital that assured the O'Reillys that they and their children were the civilized recipients of the benefits of colonial power.

The library was owned and used by all three generations of the O'Reilly family that inhabited the house between 1867 and 1975, so many of the books were published in the early and mid-twentieth century. Most notable are books related to the First and Second World Wars, in which Jack O'Reilly and his son John served. Both Kathleen and Jack were in England when war was declared in August 1914, and they lived there for the duration. Jack initially worked as a volunteer and received a commission in the Royal Navy in 1915. Kathleen inscribed a copy of *Daily Light on the Daily Path: A Devotional Text Book for Every Day in the Year* to her brother on the occasion of his commission: "A.J. O'Reilly from his sister 24th Oct: 1915."⁴¹ The inside cover and blank pages at the front and back of the book are covered with handwritten Bible verses, including: "Rest ye in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength" (Isaiah 26:4); "Be strong and of a good

⁴⁰ Charles LaPorte, *The Victorian Cult of Shakespeare: Bardology in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

⁴¹ *Daily Light on the Daily Path: A Devotional Text Book for Every Day in the Year* (London: S. Bagster and Sons, 1901).

courage, be not afraid neither be dismayed" (Joshua 1:9); and "The Lord be with you." The messages all use the medium of Bible verses to instill hope, certainty, courage, and strength, constructing the image of pious and conventional masculinity that so many soldiers in that war felt was betrayed in its actual conduct. But Jack returned safe after serving as a kite balloon observer, watching for German U-boats and enemy positions from balloons towed behind warships. He finished his career as a major, and during the Second World War became an air raid warden for the Pleasant Street / Rock Bay area, while his son served in the Royal Canadian Air Force.

Jack and Frank O'Reilly both married in 1914, Jack to Mary Windham in January, and Frank to Jessie Blakiston in April. While Frank returned with his wife to live at Point Ellice, Mary and Kathleen lived together in England throughout the war, where both volunteered for the Red Cross. Numerous books related to the First World War in the collection are associated with Mary Windham O'Reilly, including a copy of the propagandistic and popular *Canada in Flanders* by Max Aitkin (Lord Beaverbrook). She also owned a 1918 copy of Robert W. Service's *Rhymes of a Red Cross Man*, which was controversial for its representation of the bleak conditions on the Western Front. These books suggest the way that books provided a form of participation for those on the home front.

More may be learned from the books in the Point Ellice House collection. The conservatism and anglophilia of the collection are not particularly surprising, given what is already known about both the O'Reilly family and their fellow colonials; but the role of books as gifts, keepsakes, and palimpsests of identity, and the roles of reading in fostering imagined community and in marking the seasons and the passage of time invite further investigation. Most importantly, these books were signs of what their owners thought of as "civilization," reminders of the legitimacy of colonial government, and of their identities as British subjects. As literacy became more common, the volumes of Tennyson and Shakespeare and religious works on the shelf constituted the cultural capital that justified the family's modest wealth and status, maintaining the gulf between them and the Songhees settlement they could see across the Victoria Harbour from their front lawn.