



DR. A. ANN CURTIN

1889 – 1977

Dr. Agnes Ann Curtin was one of the first female graduates of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toronto following the admittance of women to the medical school in 1906. During her career she distinguished herself as a child development expert and youth counsellor. She was also an accomplished artist and an associate of the renowned Group of Seven.

In 1932, Curtin moved to the Thistletown area of Etobicoke east of Islington and south of Albion Road, where she built a log-clad home on two and a half acres of land above the Humber River. In 1933, she formed a boys' club and with the help of those young people, she planted over four thousand trees on her property. It was her dream that her house would become a centre for the arts in North Etobicoke. After her retirement in 1959, she established an annual fair on her grounds to aid a number of organizations including the Thistletown YMCA. In that same year Curtin deeded her property to the (then) Township of Etobicoke to be enjoyed as a public park for all time.

In 1952, Curtin formed an art group with a small number of interested artists from her community. Her friendship with Ada Lillian Carmichael, the widow of Group of Seven artist Franklin Carmichael, led to the naming of The Franklin Carmichael Art Group.

The mandate of the group was to provide quality art courses to the residents of North Etobicoke. From the beginning, a high standard of teaching was stressed. Weekly classes were held in the upstairs room of Curtin's log home until the popularity of the courses meant that a larger space needed to be found. Curtin's upstairs room became a studio. The classes moved to a number of other north Etobicoke spaces including St. Andrew's Anglican Church and Thistletown Public School.

Throughout the remainder of her life, Curtin worked to establish a community art centre. Her efforts paid off with the opening of the Franklin Carmichael Art Gallery – known as the Garden Gallery – in 1971. The gallery was located behind her house at the top of the hill.

In 2003, a staff report to the City of Toronto recommended that Curtin's log home at 34 Riverdale Drive be included in the inventory of Toronto's heritage properties. This recommendation was passed by City Council the same year.

Curtin was inducted into the Etobicoke Hall of Fame in its inaugural year, three years before her death in 1977. When she died, her ashes were buried under her favourite walnut tree beneath a stone marker, which was donated by the City of Etobicoke.

The Franklin Carmichael Art Group continues to operate the Franklin Carmichael Art Centre to this day, offering classes, art exhibitions and children's art camps.



Franklin Carmichael Art Centre

Inducted into the Etobicoke Hall of Fame in 1974