

## *Obituaries*

*Shirley Spragge, 1929-1995*



*Photographer: Anne Linscott; Courtesy of Queen's Picture Collection, Queen's University Archives*

Shirley Spragge, recently retired archivist of Queen's University and archivist of the Anglican diocese of Ontario, died on 11 August 1995 in Kingston of scleroderma. Born 22 July 1929 in Toronto, she received an honours history degree from the University of Toronto in 1952. She was married in 1953 to Godfrey Spragge, who most recently was a professor of urban planning at Queen's, and is also survived by her two sons, John Godfrey (Allison MacDuffee) and Michael Peter Cox (Lynne Foran).

For the past two years, Shirley had served as Book Review Editor for *Archivaria*. Her competent attention to all the details of this work and lively interest in the reviewers as well as the books will be much missed.

Shirley first connected to the practical work of archives through the Ontario Archives, where her father-in-law George Spragge was serving as Provincial Archivist. In 1956 she worked under the direction of Dr. T.R. Millman to complete an inventory of the papers of the Reverend T.B.R. Westgate, a collection that is still useful to researchers interested in mission schools in Africa and more importantly in the continuing assessment of the impact of the Residential Schools for Indigenous Canadians. She introduced the first modern descriptive practices to the then fledging Anglican General Synod Archives.

Shirley worked in the 1970s in the Cornell University Archives. She completed the archives administration course at the Public Archives of Canada in 1973 and her MA in History at Queen's in 1974, before joining the staff of the Queen's University Archives in 1979. In 1986 she completed her PhD in history at Queen's with a dissertation on "Organizing the Wilderness: A Study of a Loyalist Settlement, Augusta Township, Grenville, 1784-1814." Shirley served as Queen's University Archivist from 1992-1994.

While at Queen's she was responsible for the development of the archives programme for the Kingston General Hospital. She took a particular interest in making accessible fonds of women and those relating to the history of fine arts in Canada. As Paul Banfield has noted, Shirley was proud of her role in "*RAD*icalizing" Queen's archival descriptive practices.

Shirley was active as secretary of the Queen's faculty association and worked to ensure that this association would always be described as an association of faculty, librarians, and archivists. A founding member of the Ontario Women's History Network, she was active in local history, women's history, and women and theology groups. She also served on the Inter-faith Council at Queen's University.

Shirley's energy and commitment was legendary. Her support for women in the profession was given unstintingly. She was always looking to help the new archivist or the archivist from the small and struggling repository. She was a supporter of the development of the Archives Technician Programme at Algonquin College.

Throughout all of this she arranged her time to assist the Anglican archivists' network. This network's first major programme was the publication of a series of Guides to the holdings of Anglican archives across Canada. For the Ontario volume (1986) I well remember the planning meeting at the Aurora Conference Centre, where Shirley insisted that we surround ourselves with a display from the participating dioceses, forcibly reminding us of the physical reality of the records we were trying to make available.

We have all benefited from Shirley's warmth and her honesty, from her passion for life and her commitment to the profession. Her last note to Lisa Russell is a message for all of us: "I had no idea things would end so quickly. We've had a wonderful working relationship. Be good to the genealogists, but please keep up your archival skills. Affectionately, Shirley."

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